

TV news . . .

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Cutler notes that Reagan decided to invade Grenada within a day after TV news carried pictures of the truck-bomb attack on the Marines in Beirut. He cites evidence that the impact of those pictures on the president and public "probably hastened his decision to take a bold and prompt action when opportunity knocked in another part of the world." But surely the decisive fact was not television but what Cutler calls the "opportunity." Even Walter Mondale (although not Geraldine Ferraro) now says the danger to U.S. citizens on Grenada was sufficient to justify the invasion. And Reagan may have been — certainly should have been — at least as impelled by the appeal from Eastern Caribbean leaders. Cutler reports that immediately after the invasion of Afghanistan, Carter, eager to announce the grain embargo on camera in time for the evening news, plunged ahead without regard for potential chaos in grain markets. But this demonstrates only that television is a temptation. It is difficult to establish that the existence of evening-news broadcasts makes television, in any particular crisis the determinant of government action. To establish that it had been the decisive factor in an

episode would establish only that officials had allowed their choices to be controlled by their excessive concern for the public's opinion of the hour.

Cutler's oddest example concerns the Iranian hostage debacle: "From time to time, the administration tried to play down the hostage crisis so that world attention would abate and quiet diplomacy would have a chance. But the constant drumbeat of TV news removed that policy option." No, that option was removed by the candle-lighting, yellow-ribbon-tying Carter, who chose to say that the hostages were the first thing he thought of in the morning and the last at night.

Television is just a modern aggravation of an ancient problem of popular government: the problem of electing leaders who will occasionally act with due disregard for the mood of the electorate. No doubt, having Sam Donaldson and friends standing on your front lawn is enough to make the average person nervous, but senior officials should have better-than-average nervous systems.

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The Daily Nebraskan (USPS 144-080) is published by the UNL Publications Board Monday through Friday in the fall and spring semesters and Tuesdays and Fridays in the summer sessions, except during vacations.

Readers are encouraged to submit story ideas and comments to the Daily Nebraskan by phoning 472-2588 between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m. Monday through Friday. The public also has access to the Publications Board. For information, call Nick Foley, 476-0275 or Angela Nietfield, 475-4981.

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TRAVEL AGENDA: Your mission, should you decide to accept, is to transport yourself 25 years into the future, take a look around and write three essays of up to 500 words each. For the first two essays, you are to write about significant developments in any two of the following subject areas:

1) Electronic Communications, 2) Energy, 3) Aerospace, 4) Marine Systems, 5) Biomedical Technology or 6) Computers. In a third essay, you are to write about the societal impact of the changes you've predicted. Your entries will be judged according to creativity (30%), feasibility (30%), clarity of expression (30%) and legibility (10%).

PASSENGER QUALIFICATIONS: Any person enrolled as a regular full-time student at an accredited U.S. college or university may enter, with the exception of full-time faculty members, previous winners and Honeywell employees.

PACKING LIST: To enter the contest, type (or clearly print) your name, address, college and declared major on an 8½ x 11" sheet of paper. We also need your T-shirt size so we can send you a Honeywell Futurist T-shirt designed by French illustrator Jean Michel Folon. Each of the three essays should be typed, double-spaced, on separate 8½ x 11" sheets without your name at the top. All sheets should be stapled together and sent, unfolded, to:

The Honeywell Futurist Awards Competition, P.O. Box 2009F, 600 South County Road 18, Minneapolis, Minnesota 55426.

All entries must be postmarked no later than December 31, 1984. Winners will be notified by mail by February 1, 1985. All prizes will be awarded.

PAYLOAD: A total of 30 winners will be selected and awarded the following prizes:

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10 Second Place Winners will receive \$250.

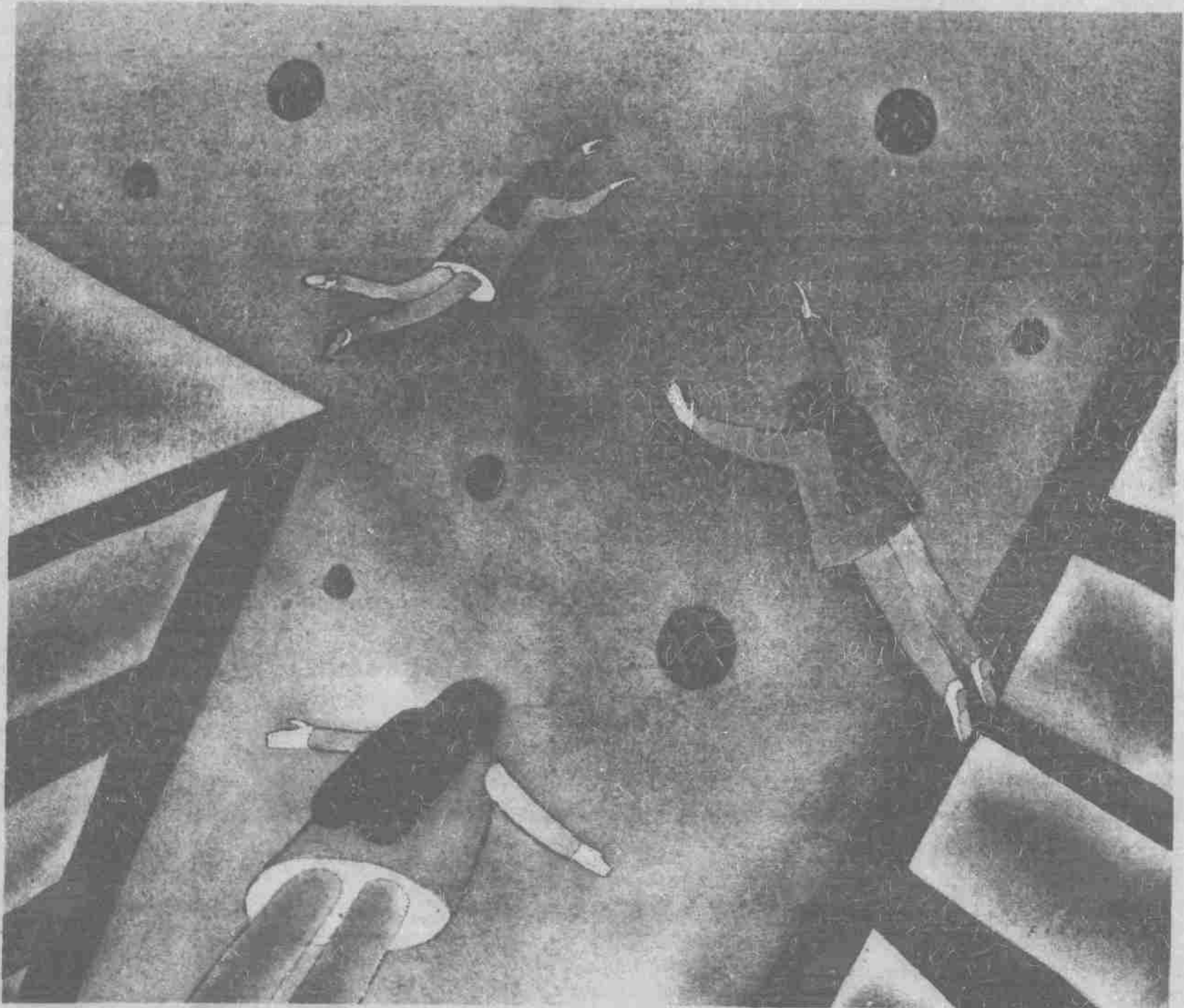
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