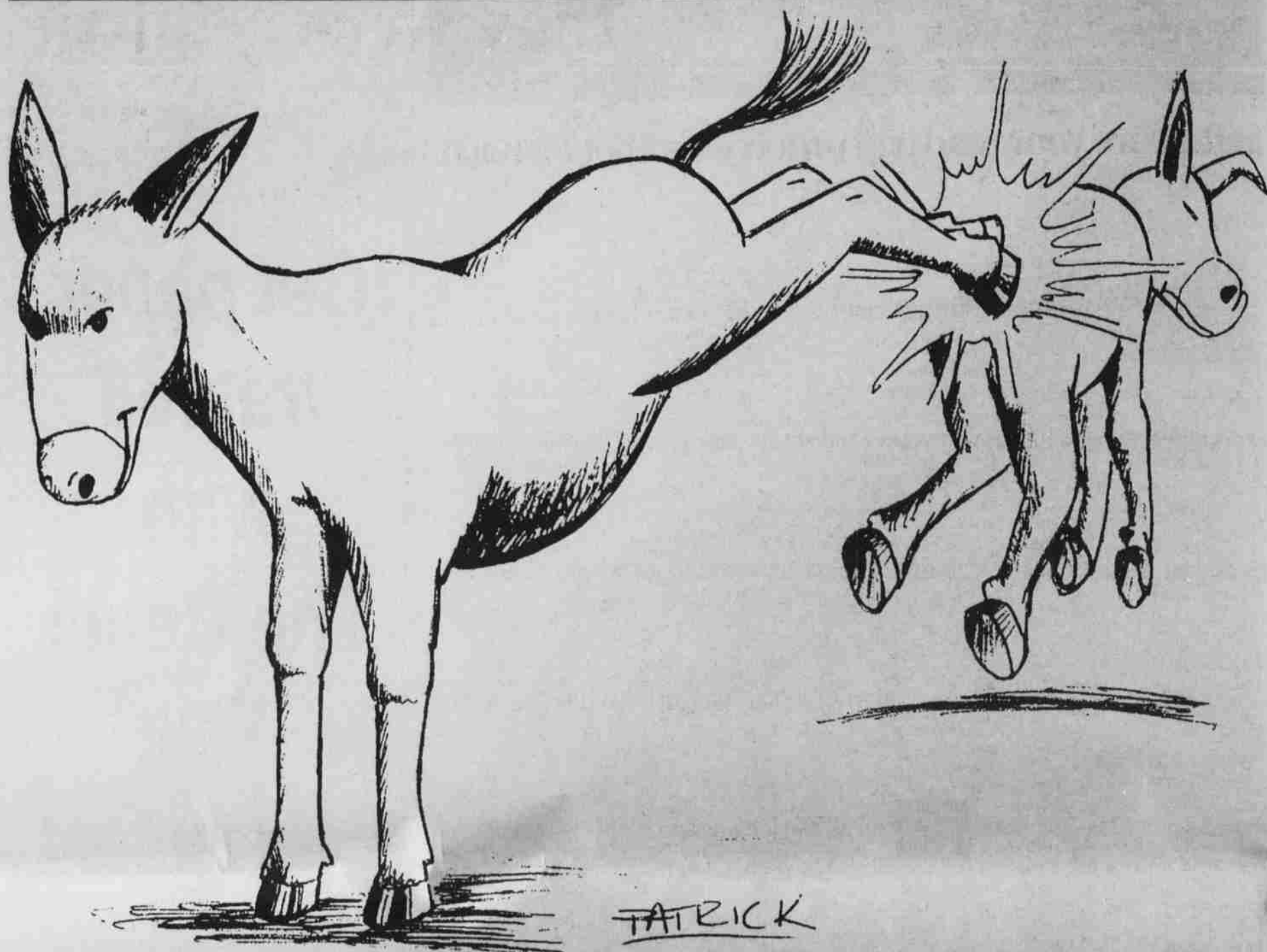


# Opinion

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THE REBEL YELL

March 10, 1992



## Of wagons and mules, what do we choose?

by Evan Blythin

Every so often, the Aztecs would take one of their good-looking, sharp, strong young men and feed him the best food, give him the best feathers and treat him like a god. Then, when the godly person felt himself to be at the very top of the ladder, when everything seemed just perfect, the high priests would take hold of the young man, rip his heart from his body and throw it to the adoring masses. It was not unlike what happens to people in leadership positions at UNLV.

I've lived through four or five presidents at UNLV. They come and they go. For 23 years, I've been one of the lesser mules at the mine, teaching, serving the community and maintaining my part of the research agenda in the minefield of academia. But every once in a while, my thoughts turn to the presidency of UNLV and what it would be like to be the mule skinner. This is the 15th letter in my campaign for the presidency of UNLV. If I were president...

I would start by issuing toes. At the rate we've been shooting them off, toes should now be a rare commodity and a

valuable campaign gift. It's really hard to walk without toes, much less play basketball. As the president, I would recommend that everyone tip-toe for awhile so that even if a shot is fired, just the tip of the toe is lost.

Right after issuing toes, I'd issue mandates about brotherly love and consensuses. I'd note that civil wars are the most costly wars, and I'd note that when no one wins, everyone must really be stupid. I'd call everyone a weenie and then I'd tell them a story to warm them up, a story told to me by my good friend, advisor and a smart business man, Richard Moore:

"I had two mules. One day I walked down to the corral and there they were, standing fanny to fanny kicking all four ways. I stepped in, grabbed them by their halters. I knocked them to their knees, and they've been working for me ever since."

To get our mules in harness and working for us, I think we need to know the kind of wagon we want to pull. Then

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we can get to the harder question of how to reconcile the differences between our lead mules. You may not like the wagon that I prefer, but I hope you will see the merit to the reconciliation suggested.

### Wagons

We have three available wagons. The first was offered many years ago by a president who foresaw our current predicament. He suggested that the University should make a part of its home town its specialty — that we should focus on the arts, theatre, music, sculpture, etc. The university has prompted and promoted a flowing of the arts in Las Vegas, but art has not been our primary focus.

The second wagon is offered by yours truly. If we want to be athletic as well as intellectual, then let's move into the genteel

sports and let's do it with flair: golf, tennis and maybe the sport indigenous to this area, rodeo. Let's send our marching band out with our golf team

and between holes we can bring the world's attention to the fact that we have one of the finest golf teams in the world. At the same time, we could show everyone that we also have one of the finest marching bands. Maybe we could send a good string quartet out with the swimmers and a country-western band out with our rodeo team. We could do it in style, as gentle men and women.

Then there is the third option, the wagon of hard sports. We've not been particularly good at pulling this wagon. But then again, many universities have fallen in this particular wagon pull. The question is, can we learn from our mistakes and make this wagon a go? I think so, but it depends on the lead mules.

### Mules

I propose that we lure them to a lush pasture with rich grains and start afresh with new lead mules. It should be a clean break, no clinching, braying or kicking below the harness marks. As part of the buy-out, each major mule will spend the next six months writing a report on the best possible process for maintaining a good relationship between mind and body, between scholars and athletes, between presidents and coaches. The regents might then evaluate the reports, engage in a quiz or two and put it together into a package that could serve us and every university in the world that attempts to integrate its physical prowess with intellectual substance.

Everyone else can take a break and get back to business. In the meantime, the next-in-command can take over and proceed to the reasonable next steps. If we can do that, we will be winners and so will everyone else. That's the way to play ball. Now, let's get our asses moving. That's what I would say if I was the president of UNLV.

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