

## EDITORIAL

### VOTE FOR AN AGGIE

The newly-carved 31st congressional district is a political milestone for Texas A&M and the Brazos Valley, and A&M students could be the decisive factor in the contest.

It is a rare opportunity to send to Washington a man who understands the concerns and will represent the interests of Texas A&M and Bryan-College Station, and that is why *The Battalion* recommends voters cast their votes in the District 31 race for Brad Barton in the March 12 Republican primary.

Barton, more than any other candidate, has made a concerted effort to bring students into the political process.

In politics, you dance with the one who brought you, and Barton will be responsive to the needs and concerns of the Bryan-College Station community.

The district also will benefit from having a congressman who can be an effective advocate for local interests from day one. Freshmen representatives start at the bottom of the seniority ladder and wait years before they become influential players on Capitol Hill, but Barton is already familiar with the ways of Washington. Through his father, Rep. Joe Barton, the younger Barton has established working relationships with congressional leaders, which will help him secure central Texas' fair share of transportation infrastructure funding.

*The Battalion* is confident Barton will be a responsive and effective representative for Texas A&M and the Brazos Valley.

## THE BATTALION

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*The Battalion* encourages letters to the editor. Letters must be 200 words or less and include the author's name, class and phone number. The opinion editor reserves the right to edit letters for length, style and accuracy. Letters may be submitted in person at 014 Reed McDonald with a valid student ID. Letters also may be mailed to: 014 Reed McDonald, MS 1111, Texas A&M University, College Station, TX 77843-1111. Fax: (979) 845-2647. Email: mailcall@thebatt.com

## A comforting presence

### Bush uses media to soothe America's fears

In the past month, President Bush has been featured on the cover of *Vanity Fair*, as well as making the top ten list of *Esquire Magazine's* Best Dressed Men in America.



KATHERINE TUCKER

As Americans are struggling to make ends meet in their shaky economic world, what is the appropriate image the president should adopt? Certainly America does not need to see its leader win a beauty contest — or does it?

The job of the president is to govern and improve the nation, but since the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks, he took on a new role and comforted a broken nation. This job included the non-stop documentation of his every effort made in the war on terrorism. However, as repetitive images and words of war flood the media, America has witnessed Bush's ability to take control in a time of emotional turmoil. Now America needs encouragement as the nation's economy is at an all time low. It is time for George W. Bush to befriend the American public by making use of popular media outlets with the hopes of restoring confidence to a poor economy.

In the past few months, the President and his staff have been climbing the social ladder in terms of appearances in popular media outlets. One of these mediums being *Esquire Magazine*, which dictates men's culture and style. In the March 2002 issue of *Esquire*, Bush is found, hand-picked and placed on a page of celebrities, each receiving the honor of the Top Ten Best Dressed Men in America. This media representation of Bush has been a change to his usual appearances in the news. The public is hesitant to see the president in the news, as the news tends to magnify his responses to the shortcomings of the economy instead of generating praises for improvements. However, Bush's appearance on popular magazines is a way for America not to see him as representing the instabilities of present day.

Bush has cleverly played off of media outlets to defer public attention away from the difficult decisions the nation faces every day. This is not to say he is abandoning his most important role as leader of the American nation,

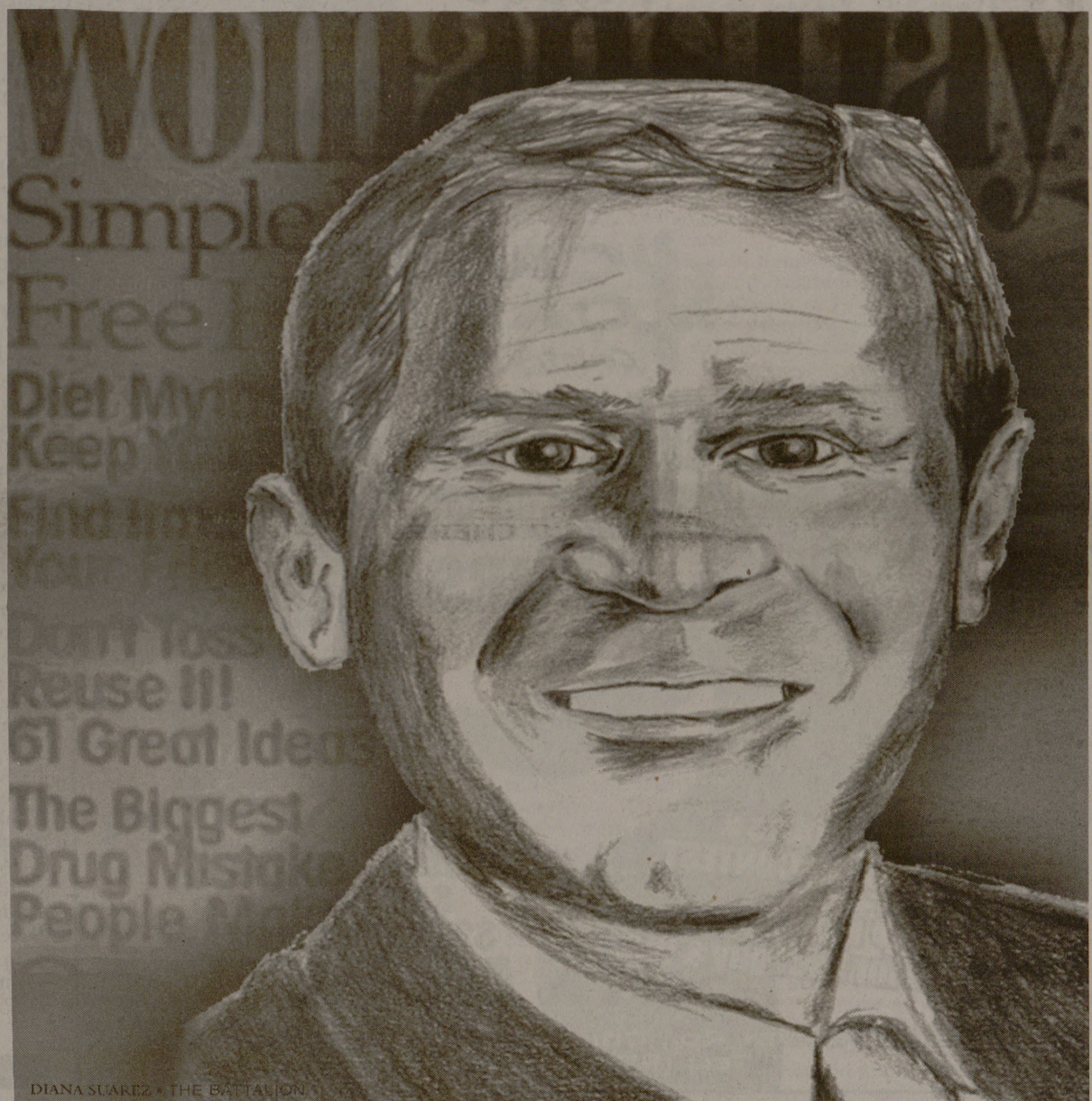
but it is necessary, at times, to meet the people on their own turf, as it is difficult for them to meet the president in his worldly occupation. Labeled "the sharpest looking Republican" by *Esquire*, Bush has given Americans reason to view him at their level. The triviality of a "best-dressed" list can be a means for breaking down a barrier between a man revered famous by the world and people who purchase magazines at the supermarket. Bush's approach to appealing to the public has been a smart move.

*Vanity Fair's* clever exploit displays the humanity of America's behind-the-scenes heroes through a lengthy photographic portfolio. The images, composed by famed photographer Annie Leibovitz, provide the public with an opportunity to look into eyes that convey compassion and hope. George W. Bush's face is worn by experience, but exhibits control. Yes, this is a simple gesture to a public in the middle of conflict, but as this conflict seems to stress the well-being of the nation, it is a photograph that provides comfort. By giving America a

chance to study his face, President Bush has allowed people to see him as a real person — a man of compassion.

The Bush administration's approach to restore the confidence of a broken nation has been dead on — let the people know us, then they can trust us. Yes, the job of the president is to govern and improve a nation, but as the world changes every day, so does its needs. As the changes due to the attacks of September 11th presented George W. Bush with a new role as comforter, he embraced it. And now, as America is moving on, it needs a new kind of President — a man who is compassionate and can be trusted to restore a broken economy. Bush's clever mastery of the media dictates his character by meeting the people at their own level, providing America with the kind of president it needs.

Katherine Tucker is a sophomore general studies major.



DIANA SUAREZ • THE BATTALION



MAIL CALL

### Miss Cleo is entertainment

In response to George Deutsch's Feb. 27 column:

Deutsch makes some excellent points regarding the unfair practices of Miss Cleo.

However, in every commercial I have seen, there is a line that reads "For Entertainment Purposes Only" on the bottom. Yes, it is small, but it is there. Miss Cleo may have used some unfair practices, but she has covered herself with those four words. It is time for people to take responsibility for their own mistakes and ignorance.

Chris Narayanan  
Class of 2000

### "Monologues" has multiple versions

In response to Esther Robards-Forbes' and Kate McCarthy's Feb. 27 mail calls:

While they stop short of actually lying about the script of *The Vagina Monologues*, McCarthy and Robards-Forbes certainly make no attempt to present the complete picture.

Brian Mangum  
Class of 2001

Jay Herndon's description of a 13-year old girl describing her statutory rape by a 24-year old woman as a "good rape" appeared in the original script of the play.

After a Georgetown student journalist pointed out the hypocrisy of the piece, the performance script for the play was rewritten for 2001 performances and beyond to address these concerns. After the revision, national V-Day organizers went so far as to threaten legal action against anyone who performed an "unauthorized" (i.e. the original) version of the play. So much for the "actual experiences" of women.

I had been determined to reserve any comment on the play until after seeing a live performance this week, but the tone of the last two days has compelled me to submit this letter. McCarthy and Robards-Forbes are either attempting to mislead readers or are woefully uninformed about the play they are defending. Either way, their cause would be well served by toning down their holier-than-thou attitudes and heeding their own advice about "seeking the truth."

## Cockfights show humanity at its worst

Long viewed by most as a primitive and gruesome sport, cockfighting, although illegal in every state except Louisiana, New Mexico and Oklahoma, maintains a tradition that is centuries old with a loyal group of subsversive followers. When one stops to consider the "sport" of cockfighting, exactly what some find attractive about it is incomprehensible.



COURTNEY WALSH

Cockfighting is man's way of making a sport by twisting an animal's instincts to work toward the animal's detriment rather than its protection. Judicial punishment — Class A and B misdemeanors and charges of cruelty to animals if convicted — for engaging in this act, and other acts of a similar nature, need to be stronger to stop this bloody sport.

The recent bust of a Grimes County cockfighting ring at the beginning of the fall semester has brought regional and state attention to this issue, exposing it as illegal betting and animal cruelty. The fact needs to be made clear that while birds within a flock will often fight for territory and dominance, such natural fights are hardly ever serious enough to cause sustainable injuries or death. It is only those birds that are selectively and purposefully bred for aggression that are provoked to fight in a cockfight. The animals, once placed in a pit, inflict serious and often mortal injuries upon one another. Wounds are made not only by their beaks, but also by their talons, to which steel implements similar to razor blades, referred to as gaffs, are affixed. Even if the birds wish to stop fighting and try to escape, they are forced to fight to the death.

According to the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, rooster handlers will even go so far as to give roosters steroids or methamphetamines to make them fight harder and faster.

The idea that some adults consider this a form of entertainment is unsettling enough, but they are not the only ones in attendance. Horrifically, parents are making this a family event by bringing their children to these surreptitious matches, which often take

place, ironically enough, on Sunday. These children either come away from such events having nightmares or become indifferent to violence against animals; study upon study has proven that violence against animals is a precursor to violence against humans.

Because of a loophole in the Animal Welfare Act of 1996, it is not illegal to breed and raise fighting cocks anywhere in the United States. One would have to be comatose to not realize these birds are transported across state lines to fight legally.

Efforts are underway to close this gap, and Sen. Wayne Allard of Colorado, a former veterinarian, is leading the way. He has introduced a bill to the United States Senate, Bill S.345, that will amend the Animal Welfare Act and seal this loophole. Yet, he is not without opposition. Where there is big business, money finds a way, this time backed by two extremely powerful organizations, the Animal Husbandry Coalition and the United Gamefowl Breeders Inc., who have persuasive lobbyists with deep pockets attempting to block Bill S.345 from coming to a vote. Senator Allard can force a full Senate vote with the sponsorship of 60 senators. Currently, the bill has 59.

Throughout the course of human history, mankind's dark side has manifested itself in the creation of what the ASPCA calls blood sports. Society has the nasty little habit of considering cultures other than its own as barbaric while its own actions, no matter how similar, are considered civilized. The Romans, a "civilized" society, attended matches where they looked on, cheering, as Christians were torn to pieces by lions. There should be no distinction between human and animal cruelty — cruelty is cruelty either way, and when mankind seeks to impose itself upon the other creatures of this planet in this fashion, all illusions of civility are shattered.

Courtney Walsh is a senior biomedical science and English major.