

Editors', Students' Voice

Battalion's Letters to The Editor Policy Explained by Former Editor; Same Today

Letters to the editors column of The Battalion has played a vital part in the campus life of A&M students. Demanding as much, if not more, readership than any part of the paper (with possible exception of the comics), students make use of this means of expression regularly.

Co-editor Clayton Selph summed up the objectives, opinion-making and goals of The Battalion in an article April 19, 1951. No material changes in this policy have been made since that time. The article is herein reprinted in full.—The Co-editors.

By CLAYTON SELPH
Battalion Co-Editor

OUT OF ALL the letters written to The Battalion, there has emerged strong evidence that much of our readership does not know how, why and by whom Battalion policies are formed.

Such a situation is serious because as long as it exists there is little chance for you, our readers, to understand The Battalion and to criticize it constructively.

First, we shall make clear what Battalion opinion is and where it may be found. That done, a discussion of how Battalion opinion is formed, who forms it, and on what basis, will be in order.

Battalion opinion is that opinion expressed in articles which are labeled "editorial." For the most part these are found on page two under the heading "Battalion Editorials." Occasionally an editorial is printed on page one. When this is done, it is so labeled.

These editorials, and they alone, are Battalion opinion. They carry no by-line and are not signed. They represent the opinion of the newspaper, not that of any particular individual. Several students do research for these editorials and write them. Each of them goes to The Battalion co-editors for approval, correction, or rejection.

The co-editors are responsible for this editorial opinion, so it is they who must decide what is shall be.

Editors Express Batt Opinion

The editorial column, then, is that part of The Battalion in which the editors express the opinion of the paper on various questions and problems. Editorials present that side of a question which the editors, after careful investigation and consideration, decide is the right side. It is the opinion of The Battalion as decided by the editors and is not advertised or branded as being any other.

Columns, on the other hand, are signed articles appearing on the editorial page or on the sports page which represent not Battalion opinion, but the opinion of the individual writer. Columnists gain the authority to express their opinion in this way by demonstrating an ability to think clearly, showing a sincere interest in the problem to be discussed, and by serving a long and strenuous apprenticeship in one of The Battalion's news departments. Such a piece of writing is an expression of individual opinion, not a Battalion editorial.

So that opposing opinion may be expressed, The Battalion, like other newspapers, opens to its readers a space for letters.

One writer has charged that The Battalion does not present both sides of every issue. To the contrary, it is you, our

readers, who have not presented your side. The Battalion considers an issue and then expresses an opinion of what it thinks is right. If those whom The Battalion serves disagree it is their responsibility to communicate their views to The Battalion in a letter.

The readership has, in this case, a decided advantage, because the letters column is read by more people than is the editorial column. It would be impossible for The Battalion to present these opposing views, because it does not know what they are. If Battalion writers do not agree with the opposing view, it is certain they cannot present it accurately and effectively.

The Battalion has always invited and welcomed such letters. And many of them are printed to the exclusion of important news stories that should be published. Battalion editors feel that letters from readers are as important as news, editorials, or any other sections of the paper provided such letters present honest and intelligent views. But in order to stick to our policy we are forced to publish many communications which are a waste of both our space and your time.

"Batt Should Express No Opinion"

A letter writer has asserted that The Battalion should express no opinions. We should like to point out here that there are few students who would sacrifice the sleep, grade-points, leisure, and standing in the cadet corps and other organizations, to work on The Battalion if there was no editorial opinion.

The Battalion editorial columns are its heart and mind. Without them it would be dead and uninteresting to its staff and its readers.

Many letters have implied that the readers must accept Battalion editorial opinion. An opinion is expressed on a particular issue not primarily to swing your views from side to side, but to encourage your interest and investigation. It is for this reason, and so that it can serve you, that The Battalion investigates and strives to locate the side of right of every issue.

If you think through a problem carefully and find you still disagree, fine. We have done our job and you have done yours.

How Is Batt Opinion Decided

Now, just what do we take into consideration when deciding what stand The Battalion should take on a particular issue? For the key to this we will go to the slogan found just under our nameplate at the top of page one. It reads, "Published in the Interest of A Greater A&M College." We do not take that slogan lightly. When we take a stand on any issue, our decision is weighed in the light of those words.

Just what does A&M College mean, as used in our slogan. To us, first and foremost, it stands for an educational institution owned and administered by the people of the State of Texas.

That means you and I, your parents and mine, and other citizens who have no sons in College. It also includes the elected, appointed and employed officials of this State and those include the employees, faculty, and administration of this college.

Famous Prexy

(Continued from Page 3)

While serving as governor, Ross heard of a school on the Brazos River, which was failing and would soon be closed by the legislature. The school was called Texas A&M and had the reputation of being a reform school for incorrigible boys.

Ross told the Legislature he would take the presidency of this school if it was not closed before he finished his term as governor. The Legislature agreed not to close A&M, and Ross took the presidency in 1890. Before long he had put the college back on its feet and had given it a good name.

Throughout his administration of the college, he was loved and respected by all who knew him. Some parents sent their sons to A&M just so they could be near the famous president.

When Ross died on Jan. 4, 1890 his death was mourned throughout the South. Although his term as president of A&M was short, his memory will always be a symbol of the college's greatness.

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