

# 1968 - '69: That Was The Year That Was

I guess there hasn't been a Battalion editor who hasn't faced his lame-duck days without feeling the urge to play historian and write a critical analysis of what has happened during his regime (or perhaps the term "stretch" would be more appropriate). And that's the form this swan song will take. Tradition and all that.

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The year got off to an optimistic start, you may recall, despite the worst housing shortage in 12 years. The opening Battalion editorial drew an analogy between this newspaper and the Aggie football team (both were "now recovering from a decline which began with the departure of a controversial mentor," and both had few seniors lost from an improving group of the previous year), and closed with the assertion that "The Batt is Back." The football team didn't quite live up to those expectations; there are probably more than a few people who feel the same about the Batt — but more on that later.

THE STUDENT Senate started making news early, and was easily the basis for more news and editorial space than any other single organization — in this or any other year. Bill Carter's inaugural address set the pace with the concept that the Senate should be the "number one organization" on the campus; our editorial observed that "this year's Senators are going to work to pay their keep" and that the Senate had "the look of a winner."

Admittedly, those remarks weren't totally sincere at the time. I had my doubts, but was willing to put in a good word for the group as a sort of civic gesture. Later on, though, it became pretty apparent that those Senators had the ability and the imagination to build on the Carter-Maddox ideals. There was not an overnight upsurge of Student Power, of course; this school has been run more or less arbitrarily since it was founded, and it's hard to teach old dogs new tricks. (There are some who still insist on the strictest quotation of that saying as it applies to our situation, holding that you can't teach an old dog new tricks. The optimists among us believe it just takes longer.)

THE SENATE'S request for a change in the administration's no-candidates speaker policy was a new trick that went untaught, of course. I don't know what next year's Senate can do to keep

up the good fight, and I suppose the fact that it won't be a big election year will be a disadvantage for those who would lead that fight. I have a good idea that the Batt will help in that direction; I know Governor Preston Smith has fairly definite ideas on the subject, and it will be up to next year's Senators to continue the rapport and cooperation with the Governor which Maddox and Carter achieved so well this year.

At any rate, the fact that Carter kept up good communications with President Rudder was borne out by the appearance of Joe Buser, one of Rudder's assistants, to explain the administration's unique definition of state laws which has been the basis for the policy. A few weeks later, other administration spokesmen came to the Senate with explanations of a different sort — the outline of automated registration.

BOTH APPEARANCES seem similar, in retrospect, in that both were cases of downward communication which made Senate debate more than a little frustrating. But at least in the second instance, the message seemed to be getting across that students had something to say about the sort of school they were paying to attend. Automated registration would, of course, go through over all objections as planned; but the Senators could sense that somewhere along the line there might have been a twinge of conscience.

Except for the working out of a "consideration section" seating arrangement for graduate students at home football games, and the installment of "hot poop" telephone announcements, the Senate had to content itself with mulling over those early frustrations until November, when a group of administrators called a meeting of student leaders to ask for views on fee-increase proposals. The fact that they accepted the students' ideas and then presented the revised plan to the System Board of Directors for approval was one of the most encouraging things that happened here all year.

THE NEXT major news item was the Fourteenth Student Conference on National Affairs. SCONA was enlightening in some ways and disappointing in others, but its most outstanding characteristic seemed to be its one-sided approach to the crisis of Southeast Asia. We referred to it earlier as "a teach-in in re-

verse" — a program which seemed dedicated to the defense of current U. S. foreign policy. Hopefully, next year's SCONA — with the somewhat less controversial topic of Africa — will be presented more objectively.

The following weekend, the Senate brought representatives from Southwest Conference schools and other Texas colleges to the campus for the second Idea Exchange Conference. This was one of those high points during the year when student government seemed real and workable, and when the unity of college students as members of a sort of sub-culture seemed to erase completely, if temporarily, the inter-school rivalries that The Aggie Way sometimes carries to hysterical extremes. It is unfortunate that more A&M students did not take advantage of the round-table talks, and next year's sponsors of the IEC should put a priority on getting more general attention focused on the talks.

IN FEBRUARY, The Battalion successfully ran a telephone survey on telephone service here. Appropriately termed the Battalion Intelligent Telephone Criticism Happening, the project showed up quite a few problems, some of which the phone company was aware of, some of which they weren't. Somehow, we never got around to following up that survey to see if the gripes were remedied. (That's one of those things that happen to you when your reporters start dwindling away and news begins happening.)

The basketball team was the next news-getter. The incident at the Baylor game here has been hashed over and re-hashed but it really didn't tarnish the conference championship — and that's fortunate, because the team really deserved to be champions even if its fans sometimes acted like something less.

THE MAJOR continuing story through the following months was the Senate's communications with the state legislature on such student-oriented topics as the voting age reduction bill and the tuition-increase proposal. In the midst of this off-campus progress was on-campus disappointment: The Civilian Student Council's "Student Forum" drew some interesting questions and answers but not very many participants. A similarly poor showing made the Great Issues forum on automated registration less than successful.

The Urban Crisis Conference definitely showed promise. The speakers, the arrangements, the relevance of the topic — all constituted a major bonus to the regular educational opportunities here. Further conferences, of course, need more participation by A&M students. (Sound familiar?)

THE EVENTS of the past month and a half are probably fresh enough in most minds that we can dispense with them here. But I'd like to reiterate some basic points about the rather unhappy events which made the big news:

- Student government suffered considerably in the Reinert election fiasco. On the other hand — and this is undoubtedly small consolation to Al Reinert, who was as thoroughly shafted as anybody I've seen in four years here — it must be noted that out of the incident came a realization of the inadequacy of existing rules; and with this, perhaps, came the more basic revelation that rules which suffice under arbitrary administrations can't be expected to work when those being ruled stop accepting the arbitrary methods.

- There is no more a place on this campus for racism than there is for flag-burnings. Any old dogs who think that statement involves a new trick can only harm this university.

- The suspension of the three students found in the Systems Administration Building had definite Sacco-Vanzetti overtones. I don't guess that needs to be commented on any further, except to breathe a sigh of relief that the Appeals Committee appears to have recognized the situation for what it was.

WELL, THAT'S a quick glance backward. As for that other direction, I can only suggest that this has undeniably been a turning-point year, and that Gerald Geistweidt and the other student leaders have their work cut out for them in 1969-70. The change in the speakers policy, published course evaluations, addition of students to the Appeals Committee, the Student Publications Board and the Board of Directors, and several more of the

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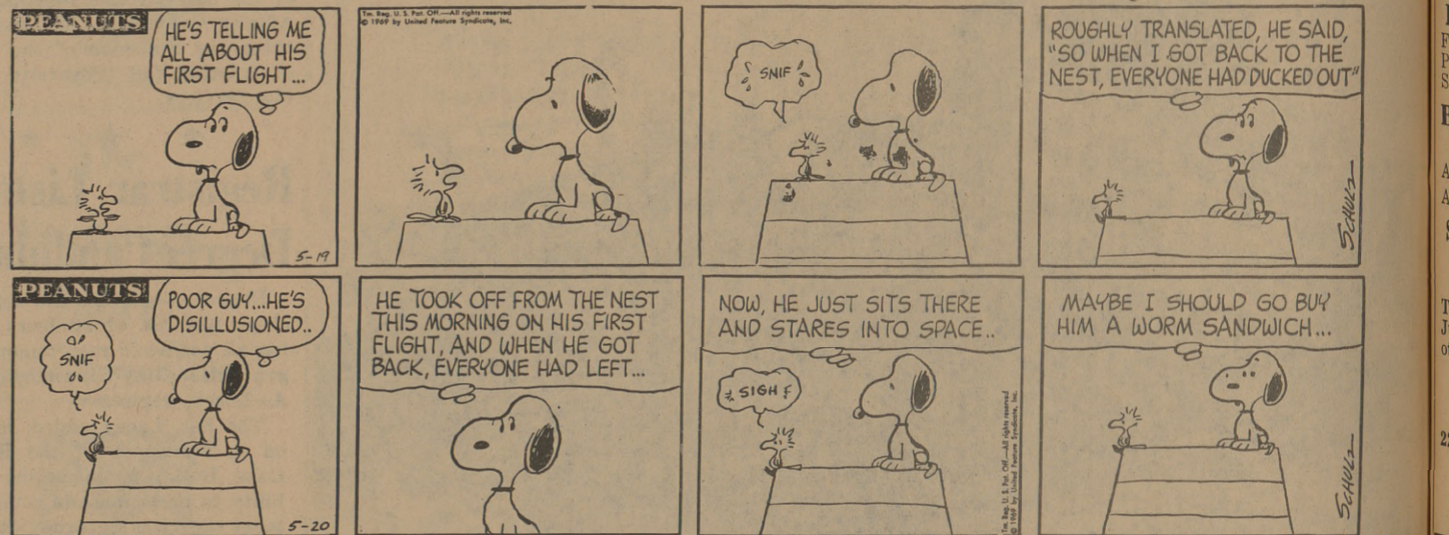
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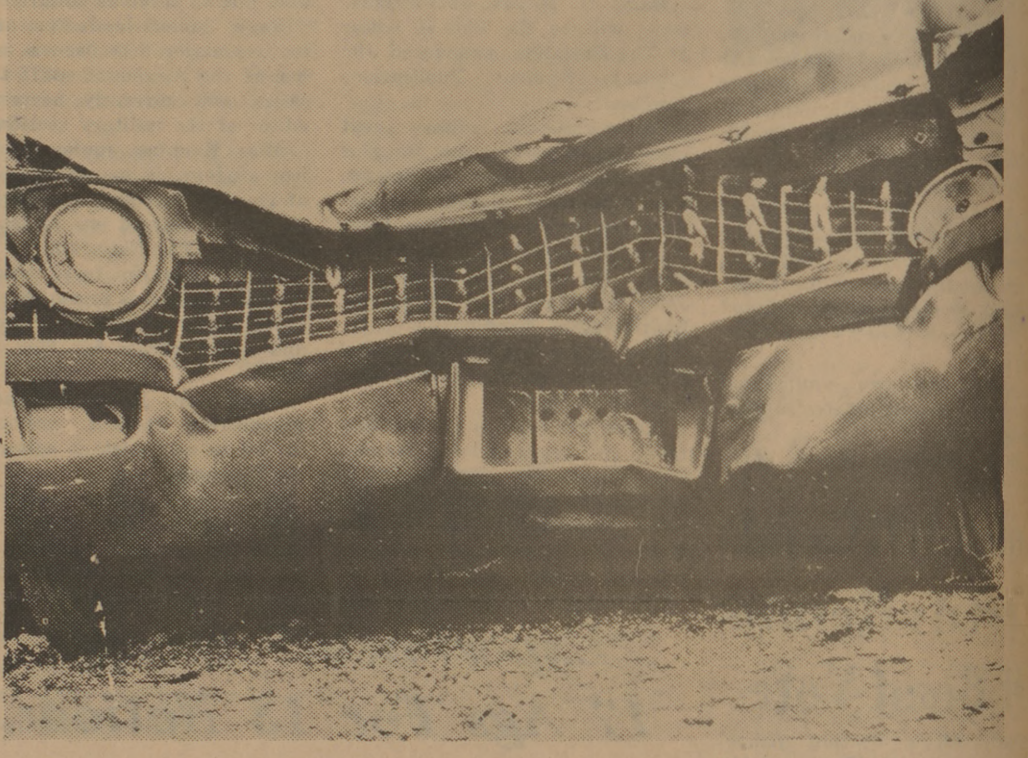
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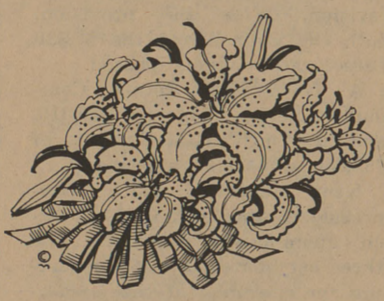
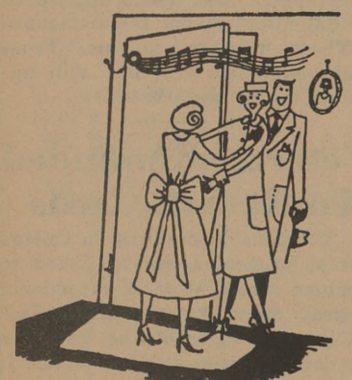
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