

# Mushrooms can be dangerous

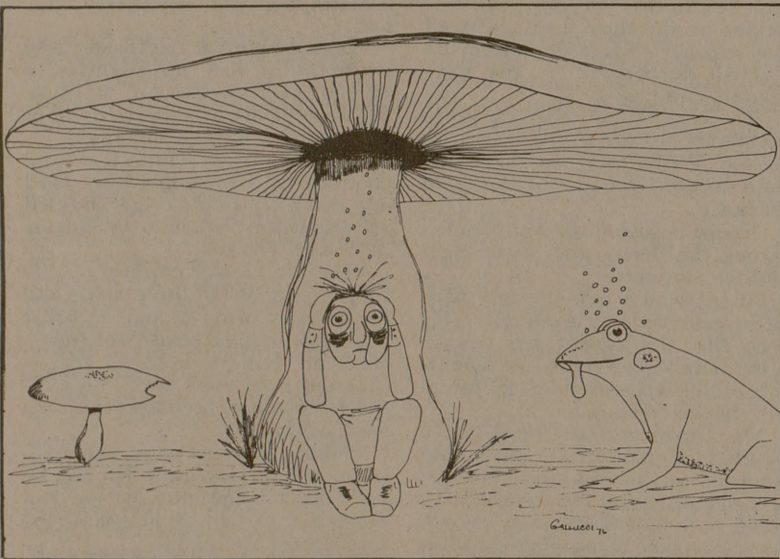
Spring inspires some people to wander through verdant meadows picking flowers. Others slash through muddy pastures scrutinizing piles of cow manure usually in search of mushrooms containing psilocybin, an hallucinogenic drug, that thrives in such conditions.

The health center on the Texas A&M University campus recently admitted a male student who was frightened by his own hallucinations after drinking some mushroom tea. "The only physical ailment he had was what we gave him," said Dr. Claude B. Goswick, director of the hospital. He was referring to a drug administered to induce nausea, in the hope that the student would vomit any unabsorbed mushrooms from his stomach.

"I don't believe that people hallucinating are having fun," Goswick contended, "although they seem perfectly all right afterwards." Goswick said a "clean-cut" all-American male came to the hospital for help last year after the mushrooms he had eaten caused his Playboy center fold to appear three-dimensional, and virtually come to life.

Hospital cases involving drugs are usually reported to either the University Police or Student Affairs.

Possession of psilocybin is a grade misdemeanor punishable by fines



up to \$2,000, one year in prison, or both. Sale of psilocybin is a 3rd degree felony punishable by fines up to \$5,000 and two to ten years in prison.

"I haven't been confronted with a case yet," said Bradley Smith, assistant district attorney, when asked whether possession of mushrooms was considered possession of psilocybin. "It would depend on the

circumstances, and whether the conduct was knowing and intentional." If proof existed that an individual had deliberately picked only mushrooms growing in cow manure, Smith said charges would probably be filed.

Symptoms associated with psilocybin intoxication are varied and include hallucinations, increased blood pressure, sweating, dilation of the pupils, temperature

increase, body hair standing on end, nausea and vomiting. Increased deep muscle tension, distortion of time sense, emotional disturbances such as extreme hilarity and difficulty in concentration, as well as mental and physical depression are also experienced.

Spanish conquerors of Mexico found the Indians using psilocybin mushrooms in religious ceremonies for worshipping deities. The ancient Aztecs referred to such mushrooms as the "flesh of the gods," and in the Indian mind, Christianity offered nothing comparable.

Psilocybe cubensis and Stropharia cubensis are the strains of hallucinogenic mushrooms commonly found near A&M. They have a golden-orange nipple on top, are whitish near the edge (turning black with age), and have black gills underneath. The stem is whitish at top, has a dark circle one-third of the way down and is yellowish with blue-green streaks toward the bottom. When pinched or broken, the stem turns blue.

There are several varieties of poisonous mushrooms which resemble Psilocybe cubensis, and can result in illness and death if eaten. Even experts have difficulty identifying "safe" mushrooms.

Dr. W. A. Taber and his wife Ruth are mycologists (specialists in fungal life) on the A&M campus, specializ-

ing in the identification of all varieties of mushrooms. They are often contacted by frightened mothers holding a half-eaten mushroom in one hand and a crying child in the other.

The effect of psilocybin mushrooms varies with dosage, individual mental and physical health, environment, and contact with other people.

"I'd advise people to avoid mushrooms like the plague," said Dr. Goswick. "Hallucinations are dangerous. You're out of touch with reality, and may do things that are potentially harmful or fatal."

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## Group opposes penal code bill

Associated Press  
AUSTIN — A group headed by University of Texas student body president Jay Adkins delivered a petition yesterday to the office of Sen. John Tower, R-Tex., asking him to withdraw his support for the controversial revision of the federal

penal code.

Adkins and about 10 other persons gave the 1,500-name petition to Tower aide Shrya Dair.

Tower is a cosponsor of Senate Bill 1, but his aide said it was uncertain whether the senator supported all of its provisions.

## Aggie dates studied

A survey on dating among Aggies being conducted by the same people who ran the breast-petting survey last semester.

Question books and answer sheets can be picked up at the following locations:

On campus: Hughes 324, Krueger 406, Law 2K, Legett 52 & 55, Moses 104, Mosher 317, Puryear 3A, 3A.

Off campus: Barcelona 2406, Bedford 207B, Doux Chene 290, Old College Main 341, Tree House 923.

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"I have introduced a Constitutional amendment to require the Federal government to balance its budget and will strongly support its passage."—Tiger Teague

**UTILITIES** Tiger Teague is working to lower outrageous utility bills through the development of new energy sources. As Chairman of the House Science and Technology Committee, he has recently passed legislation to develop America's coal, solar and geothermal energy.

"The best way to provide long-term relief from high utility costs is to become independent of foreign oil producers."—Tiger Teague

**BUSING** Tiger Teague opposes forced busing of school children. He believes that a constitutional amendment is the only way to stop it and has worked five years to achieve that goal. "If half the money spent on busing was spent on improving the quality of education, all children would be better off."—Tiger Teague

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A copy of our report is filed with the Federal Election Commission and is available for purchase from the Federal Election Commission, Washington, D.C. Teague for Congress Committee, Dr. James R. Gill, Treasurer

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