

Opinion/Commentary/Letters

Ceteris Paribus

Why not a parking lottery?

By MARK RANKIN

I recently read an article about a psychologist who was concerned that students might be under undue strain as a result of the pressures of day to day life in academia. To be sure, the pressures are there; but there are diversions. Some of us throw frisbees in front of the academic building. Others walk over and stare at the MSC. As for myself, I have become a watcher of parking lots.

My favorite one is the one that protects the Cyclotron from MacDonald's, its number has slipped my mind. It is relatively small, as parking lots go, and it has managed to remain assigned to the students although it has suffered more than a few encroachments from rival staff lots.

The thing that makes this lot so interesting is not unlike the thing that sends men off to war. It is the thrill of battle. If you don't believe me put down your frisbee and meet me there between 9:40 and 10:00 any weekday morning. What you will see is a phenomenon that economists have labeled "excess demand," but I call it war.

It takes a special sort of person to go to war but the parking lot wars have their own specialists: the vultures and the trackers. The vultures

show up about 9:30 and position themselves at either end of the lot. Sometimes in the middle. When an unsuspecting student decides to leave campus, the vultures are down on the vacant space in a second. Usually the kill is instantaneous and merciful but I have seen more than one pedestrian left bleeding in the wake.

The trackers, on the other hand, are somewhat more cunning. They will pick up the trail of a likely vacancy and follow it to the ends of the earth. I once saw a tracker follow a girl from the Academic Building, through the MSC, and into lot 60 only to be frustrated when her car stalled half way out of the space and a vulture in a Volkswagen squeezed in ahead of him. Watching these people is fun, but the sight of blood is beginning to get to me. Instead, why not a parking lottery?

Parking lots would be assigned numbers based on their distance from the Academic Building. In this scheme there would be no student lots or staff lots, just lots. Toward the end of each semester students and staff would enter bids reflecting their valuation of parking spaces and these bids would be used to assign stickers to all who have bid. The bids would be ranked and matched with parking lots; the highest bids

receiving space in the closest lot and so on. If one did not like his lot designation, he would be free to transact with someone whose assignment was more desirable. Those who did not choose to bid or may have arrived after the bidding would be allowed to purchase space for the amount of the highest bid associated with the lot of his choice.

It is possible, under this system, that a bid of \$20 would place you in one of the more distant lots but it is also possible that the same bid would allow you to park rather close in. The point is that you would have no one to blame but yourself if your bid were not high enough.

The present system of allocating parking spaces is inequitable at its best. There is no reason that a professor or a secretary should have any better access to the campus than the rest of us, given that a student cannot bid against either of them for that access. The parking lottery system can be a viable one. At its worst it is better than the present system which makes access to the campus a function of whether you pay, or are paid by, the university.

Slouch by Jim Earle



Most students here to learn

Editor:

Every semester new students come face to face with new instructors. Often, what happens in those first encounters has much to do with the outcome of the semester.

I have observed several methods of course introduction and found two common approaches.

There are some instructors who really seem to look forward to having a new group of students. They carefully explain the course requirements, objectives and grading plan, letting the student know exactly what is expected. These instructors are enthused and they may even express their optimistic belief that their students will do well. This enthusiastic approach is contagious and students respond from the beginning. Oftentimes these courses may even be more complex and demanding than others.

There are other instructors who introduce themselves in a negative way. They convey their feelings that the student is only trying to get through the course in the easiest way possible. These instructors make the semester's demands sound rigorous and daunting with little emphasis on what is gained. In some cases, the student finds little correlation between stated demands and actual work required. Nevertheless, he is already being turned off by the instructor's course introduction.

Sure, it is the student's responsibility to put forth the effort to participate and learn regardless of what the instructor would be so much more than an instructor to just deal with the adult-to-adult relationship. Most students are there because they want to learn.

—Toumonava Mallon

Academic advisors exist

Editor:

Academic advisors at Texas A&M do exist, Mr. Miller!

It appears that Henry Miller has been unfortunate in his encounters with student counselors; however, he should not be quite so general in his opinions towards them.

Since the first day of my freshman year, one of my most trusted friends has been my past academic advisor.

I was assigned to Dr. T. D. Tanksley, Department of Animal Science, and his help cannot be underestimated.

I went to visit Dr. Tanksley a number of times during my first year (often without an appointment) and I do not recall a time when he wasn't there to counsel whatever problem I might have had. Not only did he see to my best interests, but he also informed my parents that he was my advisor and if they had any questions they could call him at his office any time.

I recall only one time that I outwardly angry with me when I failed to interrupt him in order to get help with a personal problem.

Since my freshman year, I changed my major to Agriculture Journalism. Here, too, I had an advisor to be helpful and when I needed him.

I suggest students put forth their academic advisors in their way situation. For those who have had problems, see to it that they have an advisor. Whether Miller was unfair or just careless with his advice, it is not for me to judge, but the two counselors on campus do never know the extent of their appreciation.

—Charlotte Mead

A Dutchman hears quiet Texas

A DUTCHMAN HEARS QUIET TEXAS

Is this country noisy? The German who reported his view (Battalion, Feb. 18) thought so, and I can agree with him on the operation of a garbage truck being disturbing, especially for those who shun the early daylight. One of the reasons why I moved away to another apartment last year. But Herr Haaf generalized to an extent that seemed unfair. I could assert that Europe is much noisier than the States, and come up with arguments to support that. Just send a West-European off to Loving County for a week's desert camping and ask him afterward how noisy this country is. That's not the way to do it, though. In the first place, Germany is incomparable in size with the U. S. The population distribution is incomparable. And the noisy events

are qualitatively different. Of course, urbanization proceeds here also, and it could well be that American city centers in general reflect a higher level of audio pollution than German ones, as central cities depopulate and definance.

What about the people? A lot of Germans and other Europeans who emigrated in the past two centuries did so because they preferred a lower level of government involvement. They implicitly chose for a lack of national planning, for less taxes and less federal spending. The Germans who stayed in the old country are, oddly enough, not subject to as rigorous a car emission control nor equal employment regulations as the present-day Americans. But their small cars are noisier than the non-compact U.S. equivalents. The streets are narrower, population density is higher.

Secondly, what is noise? Are the

European criteria the same as the ones over here? Should we make a composite index that is a weighted average of rural and urban noise? Is it illogical that a less densely populated country designs standards later than a crowded one? Are there cultural or biological differences in the acceptance of noise? Edward Hall's "Hidden Dimension" suggests that human territorial claims differ widely by culture. Concepts of privacy and social perception are differently defined for Germans, Dutchmen, and Americans. Is Haaf sure that when "80 million people in this country are significantly affected by noise" the same thing, on a similar scale in Germany would have a similar connotation? The citation of the Noise Control Act looked as much significant as the article's title was diplomatic. My reaction is that of a puzzled reader who is faced with seemingly incomplete statements by a Harkness fellow. Let's just quietly live on.

—Jeff Stuyt

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