

Viewpoint

The Battalion
Texas A&M University

Wednesday
December 14

Tracking down Christmas spirit

What is "the Christmas spirit?" People these days talk about it as some magic trance: "I'm just not in the Christmas spirit yet," or "setting up the tree always gets me in the Christmas spirit."

Or they speak of some high profit-margin commodity: "The stores are just full of Christmas spirit." And "Let me pour you a little Christmas spirit."

All the while, they moan that "it's just not the same as it used to be." Of course it's not. We're not the same as we used to be.

So often, the good old-fashioned "way it used to be" was a product of those good old-fashioned

times, in another kind of world.

But the things that made Christmas special then, and still can now, haven't become old-fashioned or out-dated or replaced with newer models. They're things that can truly be called a "spirit," a way of looking at the world anew with eyes that usually feel very old.

They're simple things.

The mixture of surprise, delight and pure terror in every child's eyes when he meets Santa Claus "for real" the first time.

The way you can say a hearty "Merry Christmas" to a man, feel a really warm, nice happiness

inside and 20 steps down the street suddenly realize you didn't even notice whether he was black or white, whether he was in fine tweed or tattered denim, or whether his hands were soft and clean or calloused and soiled.

The soft, hushing sound of out-of-tune voices singing "Silent Night" late at night, reminding you to say "Happy Birthday, Lord," if only to yourself and Him.

Those things are still there. Like all the simple things, they're sometimes hard to see and easy to overlook. You've just got to look.

Merry Christmas. L.R.L.

Striking farmers may be planting problems

Today the nation goes hungry. At least idealistically, for at midnight about half of America's farmers went on strike.

We sympathize with the farmers' grievances. Escalating land prices, rising production costs and falling grain prices are eating away farmers' profits. Grain prices now stand at about \$2 a bushel; farmers say \$5 a bushel is break-even.

Farmers are asking for 100 percent parity, a return for their product that will allow them to break even on their labors. They are not getting it in today's market and they're striking for governmental reforms.

Obviously, if we don't put an income in their pockets, they won't be around to put food on our tables. Thousands are being driven out of the farming business every year because of the meager subsistence it yields.

There is no question that some serious and immediate consideration is needed to keep our farmers in business.

We do question, however, the means by which the farmers are calling attention to the problem. A strike involving half of the nation's farmers could very possibly have a negative effect on the drive for parity. A leader in the strike organization, American Agriculture, said last month that "agriculture has built this country and agriculture can destroy it." No argument there. When you've got people by the breadbasket, you've got them where it hurts. However, our gluttonous populous jealously guards its food stock, and threats to cut off the supply could easily come across with the ring of militancy.

At this point in time the farmer needs our concern, because even if we're not getting our hands dirty, we're all very much involved. But the farmer may end up hurting his chances for nationwide support if his ire at Congress is interpreted as a threat against the American people. It should come as no surprise that the average U.S. Joe isn't too happy about being used as the football in this contest.

Nor are many farmers happy with the American Agriculture movement. Traditionally fierce independents, most farmers realize that if the strikers'

Tell me how the weather is in Washington, Sam



tactics don't pan out they could be caught both unprepared and unanswerable. The grassroots farmer that has worked the land all his life would rather keep the business going while putting his faith in steady negotiation than put his all into a nationwide show.

We believe that the American farmer, whether glued to the soil or idealistic enough to chance a major walk-out against Congress, has legitimate gripes. We stand behind him in calling for reforms in current agricultural policy. But we feel a warning is in order for the crusading farmers across the country. While you refuse to raise one more crop to illustrate your plight, you may find that you're planting seeds of dissent among millions of Americans whose support you are currently seeking. J.A.

Letters to the editor

Radio station operates with more than 'erecator set'

Editor: In reference to Glenna Whitley's article on local radio stations in last Thursday's Battalion, we would like to clarify a few points about KANM that were not brought up in the article.

First of all, the control board that Ms. Whitley said "looks like it was put together with an erector set" is only a temporary board. Our normal operating board is being repaired at this time, and will be in operation at the beginning of the spring semester. This board will offer our listeners a much cleaner and more powerful signal.

Also, we would like to clarify a comment made by one of our D.J.'s concerning the need for another station like KANM in this area. We feel that because KANM offers such a wide variety of music as to appeal to all types of listeners, no such need exists.

KANM thanks this semester's listeners, and hopes you'll be joining us next semester at 89.1 fm.

— Bob Gibbons
Mike Fred
KANM Staff

Open dorms needed

Editor: Can Texas A&M ever be accused of not wanting to change for the better? I believe not. However, a situation has arisen which deserves the careful consideration of the student body.

The subject is dorm visitation hours. Presently, dorms enforce a policy of restricted hours in which visitors of the opposite sex must be out early, on weekday nights, and late, on weekends. I fully support that part of the policy dealing with weekday restrictions. After all, most of us are here to obtain an education, and the effect of innumerable members of the opposite sex running through the halls during study hours would be... well, distracting, to say the least.

However, why not have a policy of unrestricted visitation on weekends? We're all adults, between the ages of 18 and 25, and we're mature enough to handle the increased responsibilities of the situation. When we leave Texas A&M and enter the outside world, no one will tell us what time to be in or what time to be out. If college is designed to present an introduction to education and also to later life, wouldn't it be better if college life was more realistic with respect to the future, as long as it didn't interfere with education?

Many people might be afraid that unrestricted visitation on weekends would lead to massive pandemonium. I can't believe that merely opening the dorms on Fridays and Saturdays would turn A&M into one big beer bust. Moreover, for those of us who need to study on weekends, there are several excellent areas on campus, such as the MSC. Lastly, let's not forget that the largest group of Aggies experience no visitation hours whatsoever. I refer to the off-campus students.

So how about it, Ags! Let's think about having an open dorm policy on weekends, while maintaining restrictions during the

week. The time is now and the choice is yours.

— Patrick Giam, '81

Merry Christmas

Editor: This is not a dirty letter or an argument. We just want to wish all our fellow Aggies a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

— Robert Ochoa '81
Steve Seat '80

Students need rooms

Editor: I am writing to voice my opinion on a subject which I believe to be important. This subject concerns the lack of sufficient on-campus housing facilities at Texas A&M University. There are approximately 30,000 students enrolled at Texas A&M this fall, yet the university has only enough dormitory accommodations to house less than 8,000 students. This amounts to only about 27 percent of the student body. This situation would be fine in the event that only 27 percent of the students wanted to live on-campus. Unfortunately, this is not the case.

Many more students desire to live in dorms than can presently be accommodated. In order to secure a dormitory room at this time it is necessary that a room reservation card be mailed to the Housing Office no less than twelve to eighteen months before enrollment. Even if the card is mailed in time, the prospective student still cannot be sure he will obtain a room in a dorm. I know of many people who wanted to come to A&M but instead chose other universities for the simple reason that they could not secure on-campus housing here at A&M.

Many entering freshmen who did not get their room reservation cards mailed in early were forced to move into apartments. Granted, not everyone wants to live in a dormitory. Many students prefer to live in an apartment. They enjoy the freedom and privacy of living away from campus. Those students who want to live in dormitories

feel that living on-campus has its advantages as well. Some of these advantages include the easy access to activities that occur on campus; the feeling of pride that develops from living in a dorm; the experience one gains from living and relating to people with common goals and problems.

It is not by purpose, however, to argue the benefits and drawbacks of on and off-campus living. My purpose in writing this letter is to express my belief that those people who want to live in a dorm should be able to do so. Many prospective students cannot afford to live in off-campus apartments. These students, who badly want to become Aggies, are forced to attend other universities which can provide economical dormitory facilities. I am damn proud to be an Aggie, and it bothers me to think that A&M loses so many prospective Ags just because of an insufficient amount of dorm accommodations.

The solution to the dormitory shortage seems to be to build more on-campus facilities capable of housing additional students. It is unrealistic to believe that the problem can be solved overnight. The building of new dormitories would take lots of time and money. Even if several large dorms were built, the on-campus housing shortage would not be totally eliminated; but the construction of the new dorms would result in a lessening of the problem.

I feel it is the duty of this university to try to provide more dormitories to those students who desire them.

— Bryan Ellis, '81

Thanks to committee

Editor: I would like to publicly give a hearty "thank you" to the Memorial Center Hospitality Committee who gave the Christmas party for the children of this community Thursday, Dec. 8. My three children, along with several hundred others, enjoyed the animated movie about Christmas and the party that followed.

I do not know the names of the members of this committee, but I do realize they spent valuable hours in service to

others that they could have used to study for final exams.

Other parents in the community may be interested in a similar type of program which will be presented by the Memorial Center Hospitality Committee before Easter. I wholeheartedly recommend it and hope to take my kids back for that function as well.

I hope the Battalion would see fit to publish the names of the students who participated in this worthwhile endeavor and give them special recognition for their efforts.

— Steven A. Yates
Assistant to the Dean
Engineering

Systems change due

Editor: I feel that something needs to be done about the manner in which tickets are distributed for the home football games. Although this season is over, next season will be as good a time as any to revise the present system.

First of all, the seniors and graduate students should not only get first chance at the tickets as they do now but they should also get the best seats. Currently, a senior might get a twenty yard line seat but then a junior might get a fifty yard line seat. It is only fair that the seniors and graduate students get the best seats because they have supported the Aggies longer than their underclassmen.

I also feel that more good yard line seats should be allotted to the student body in general. Of course, there should be a large section of good seats for those members of the Association of Former Students, but too many choice seats are going to the general public. It would be much more fair to the student body, including the freshmen and sophomores, if all the students got a yard line seat of some sort to each home game. More of the general public should be put in the bleachers and horseshoe.

In addition to a new system of allotting tickets, what is really needed is a larger seating capacity in Kyle Field. This is soon to be taken care of with the addition of a third deck on both sides. This is dumb. Sure, this idea makes for more yard line seats, but it also calls for the raising of the lights and the pressbox. Why not simply extend the present upper deck completely around the horseshoe? It will make for a much nicer looking stadium than one with three decks and will also cause less panic to those who suffer from the heartbreak of acrophobia.

Though the enlargement of the stadium is not intended for completion for a few years, the seating capacity will be increased by several thousand next year. Some genius has decided that the average American posterior has decreased in size, and therefore, the width of each seat will be decreased from eighteen inches to sixteen inches per square butt. However, this should not be much of a bother to most students since they stand up for most of the game.

— Randy Scott

Top of the News Campus

Student holiday parking set

Students who plan to leave their vehicles on campus during the holiday period are requested to park them in PA-9 (located off Old Main Drive). Bicycles that are left on campus should be locked and secured; they may be stored in dormitory rooms for this purpose. University Police will have personnel on duty at all times during the semester break.

Leadership seminars slated

Students who plan to hold leadership positions in recognized student organizations next semester or next year are invited to apply to attend a series of leadership seminars which will be offered during the spring semester. The program is designed to give students insight into the administrative management of Texas A&M University and to meet various administrators. The seminars will meet every Thursday from 3:30 p.m. to 5 p.m. The seminars are non-credit and require no outside assignments. Interested students should apply at the Student Activities Office, 845-1134. The program will be limited to 25 students.

Checkers site of yell practice

Midnight yell practice for the Bluebonnet Bowl will be held at Checkers, on the corner of Woodway and Voss in Houston. It will be at midnight on Dec. 30. This is the same place it was held for the Texas A&M-Rice game.

Bike parking for a quarter

The Texas A&M University Student Government is offering to store bikes in the pistol range under Kyle Field for 25 cents during the semester break. The bikes will be under lock, key and the supervision of the University Police. Student Government workers will store bikes from 5 p.m. to 7 p.m. Wednesday and Thursday at the range. Bikes may be picked up Jan. 16, the first day of class.

State Girl survives plane crash

Searchers who rescued a critically injured 3-year-old girl from the wreckage of a single-engine plane that crashed on a mountainside Sunday, credited her parents with her survival. Both parents were killed. Shara Sneed, the youngest of four family members aboard the plane when it crashed Sunday night, was rushed to a hospital and placed in intensive care for treatment of broken bones and other injuries. The surviving child was found strapped in the fuselage along with her father, mother and 5-year-old brother who were all dead when rescuers reached the scene Tuesday morning. Kerr County Deputy Sheriff Shannon Jones said San Antonio attorney Gerald W. Sneed, 33, and his wife, Susy, 32, securely strapped both of their children in the plane's back seat and surrounded them with cushioning in anticipation of the crash.

Lawsuit filed for Nativity scene

Atheist leader Madalyn Murray O'Hair Tuesday filed a \$9 million federal lawsuit against Gov. Dolph Briscoe and Attorney General John Hill to force them to remove a nativity scene from the State Capitol. O'Hair said in the suit that Briscoe, Hill and Homer A. Foerster, director of the State Board of Control, unconstitutionally used state property to display Christian symbols. The suit complained the placing of the nativity scene beneath a 25-foot Christmas tree in the capitol rotunda, an annual occurrence, was an unconstitutional mixture of church and state.

Nation Freedom, family awaited a few

The first of the U.S. prisoners returning from Mexican jails were being released from custody to jubilant reunions with their families and friends. Forty-one of the 235 prisoners returned to the United States so far were expected to be released. Four others who have completed their Mexican sentences face other charges and will be retained in custody.

The United States, the new home for some 165,000 Indochina refugees since the end of the Vietnam War, is studying the possibility of helping resettle more than 100,000 additional refugees stranded in Thailand. Immediate admission to the United States is being considered for some 4,700 refugees who fled Vietnam or Cambodia by boat, the State Department said Monday. Special U.S. entry permits are under consideration until the Carter administration and Congress develop a comprehensive policy for the remaining refugees.

World Spies found with keys to safe

Three members of a newly discovered communist spy ring had keys to a safe in the West German Defense Ministry which contained more than 1,000 secret documents. Counterintelligence officials acknowledged Monday that the spies obtained and passed to East German copies of many key secrets, including the NATO and Bonn defense strategies in case of Soviet block attacks. The spies, a former secretary in the defense ministry; her husband, also employed by the ministry; and a former employee of the naval staff, were arrested last year in a major dragnet of communist agents.

Correction

In "New copyright law affects libraries or journal in five years. The limit for but not students," a story published in last Wednesday's Battalion, we incorrectly reported that libraries may borrow or have copied five articles from a single magazine

Weather

Clear and mild today and tomorrow with light and variable winds. High today near 70. Low tonight mid-40s. High tomorrow low 70s. No rain.

The Battalion

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