

VIEWPOINT

THE BATTALION
TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY

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Slouch

By Jim Earle



"I've sure been getting more respect since I took up the violin."

RADAR fights schools' vandals, absentees

By PATRICIA McCORMACK

United Press International

A RADAR club helps combat vandalism, absenteeism, pesky antics on school buses and other problems at Huntington High in Shreveport, La., Principal Thomas C. Archey says in the National Association of Secondary School Principals "Bulletin."

Other problems RADAR helps curb include these, common to most high schools: littering, disrespect toward teachers, disturbances at assembly programs.

RADAR has nothing to do with trapping wayward students via electronic circuitry — the way a state trooper may nab a speeder.

It's an acronym standing for Raiders Active on Duty Assisting Raiders.

Archey said RADAR members encourage students to follow school rules by providing them with positive examples — "and by using the art of gentle persuasion."

RADAR recruits members from among students with good discipline records and at least a "C" average.

"The RADAR students, divided into eight teams of 10 members each, are instructed to intervene in campus disturbances in their assigned areas with assistance from other members whenever possible," Archey says.

"Other duties include monitoring restrooms, student assemblies, and other school activities."

"Students start working when they board their school buses in the morning and continue until they get off their buses at the end of the school day."

This question comes up: is RADAR a spy organization that makes a list of infractions against school rules run up by various cut-ups and tattlers?

"Nope," says Archey. "The students do not report violations of school rules to administrators."

"Instead, serious violations are reported to the club sponsors."

"Club members are able to handle many minor incidents that would otherwise have been reported to the principal."

What if being on RADAR duty interferes with a member's schoolwork? Getting late to class, for example.

"Students who are late for their classes because they have been handling campus problems are admitted to their classrooms by showing their special RADAR club cards," Archey says.

So what's the bottom line, the payoff? The RADAR club was formed in the fall of 1979. In the first three months Huntington High was feeling the results, the principal says, there were:

— Fewer suspensions.

— Increased daily attendance. (On an average day, eight percent of the students enrolled

in the nation's public schools are absent. National health officials estimate the normal rate of pupil absence due to illness to be around four or five percent a year. In some areas absenteeism averages 10 to 15 percent. The problem is more acute in urban schools where absentee rates may reach 30 percent or more.)

- Fewer fights.
- Decreased vandalism.
- Fewer litter problems on the campus.
- Fewer trays and less food left on the cafeteria tables during the lunch shifts.
- Fewer problems on school buses.
- Fewer incidents of student disrespect toward teachers.
- Fewer disturbances at assembly programs.

"The RADAR club clearly illustrates that student influence can make a difference," Archey tells fellow principals.

"The sense of belonging and pride in the school and classroom are the keys."

A related report in the "Bulletin" tells about an unusual attendance policy at Ellison High in Killeen.

The school for 2,400 — grades nine to 12 — opened two years ago. During the first year it had the best average daily attendance rate in the district.

Why? Robert L. Carruthers Jr., assistant professor of education Memphis State University in Tennessee, and John Driver, principal of Ellison, say it is due to the different attendance policy.

Major points of Ellison's policy are:

- Credit toward graduation will be withheld for any course in which the student has been excessively absent. The policy is based on the notion the student who attends school regularly gets maximum benefit, achieves higher grades, enjoys school more and is more employable after leaving school.

- Students in the first two high school years must bring a note from home after having been absent.

- A student is allowed six absences per quarter per class without penalty (except for truancies). Valid absences include personal illness, medical or dental appointments, death in the immediate family, or serious personal or family problems.

- When a student runs up four absences from any one class, a notice is mailed home. After the sixth absence parents are given an opportunity to schedule a conference with the counselor or principal.

- A student absent from a class seven times within a quarter will lose credit for that class. The student has responsibility for filing for an appeal for credit — which may be granted if the student makes up missed work.

- Three tardies of less than five minutes equal one absence to that class. A tardy of more than five minutes is considered an absence.

A Christmas card for Eddy

By BRIAN J. GROSS

Eddy was the kind of guy who didn't fit into our group very well; he didn't fit into anyone's group very well. Eddy was a loner. He usually came up to the high school either in the morning, before school started, or at lunchtime. I really didn't know much about Eddy; he didn't go to high school (or any school), although I didn't know why; he worked in a garage somewhere in town (I think), though I'd never gone to see him, nor did I want to; he didn't have any family — at least I didn't know of any.

But Eddy tried to fit in; he wanted to fit in. He would usually come up to school and just hang around, going from one group to another, stopping whenever anybody would acknowledge him. He would sometimes stop at our group, although none of us knew him (except by name). We'd usually ignore him, but he'd stay with us, listening to us talk, laughing at our jokes, and sympathizing with our problems, although none of us cared whether he sympathized or not.

Eddy always wore some greasy blue jeans, a torn flannel shirt, and old high-top tennis shoes; he always had a musty, stale gasoline odor, which wasn't particularly offensive, but not really pleasant either. He was kind of lanky and had blond hair, which was always dirty and never combed; I don't think he ever got a haircut in a barbershop; it wasn't long, but it jutted out at irregular lengths. I don't think he ever

Reader's Forum

had anything to say; whenever he said something, it would either be very stupid or very irrelevant, and sometimes both. Eddy was a kind of inside joke. One time a friend tore his shirt in chemistry class; when talking about it later at lunch (Eddy wasn't with us that day), he said he had borrowed the shirt from Eddy; someone in the group asked, "What's Eddy wearing?" We all laughed, although we knew it wasn't very funny, not even then.

But, I remember one incident in particular. It was a few days before Christmas break. We were standing in front of the school, waiting for classes to start, when Eddy came running up to us. He started to babble about his Christmas card; he showed it to us all. The card was obviously several years old; it was yellow and torn on the edges. One of the girls asked Eddy who had sent him the card; he fumbled for an answer and read the signature inside. "Who are those people?" she persisted. And, then, something most disquieting happened. The girl in our group said, "Come off it, Eddy. You didn't get that card; you found it. It's old and torn up —

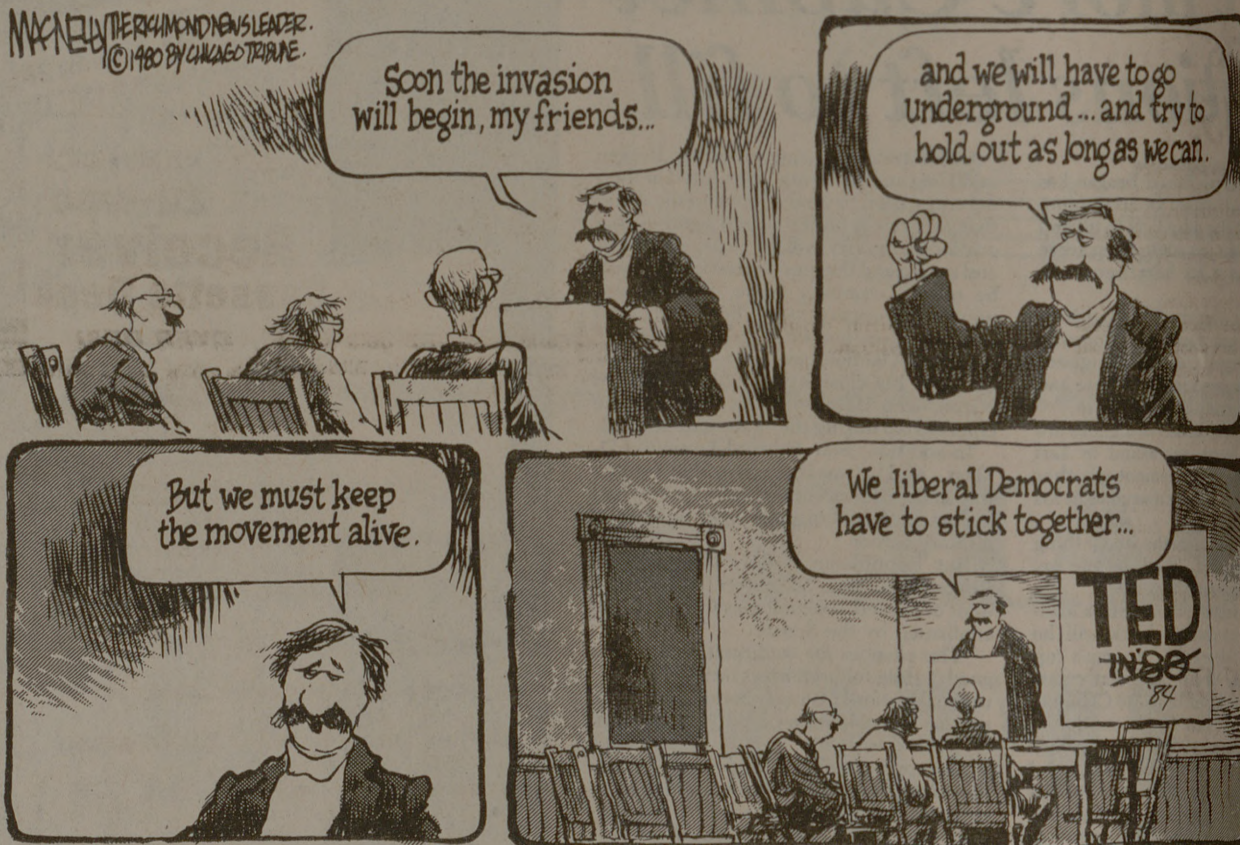
you don't even know who those people are. We all stood there with our mouths open, staring at Eddy and at each other, dumbfounded, insisting he had received it from some relatives out of town. Then he and we went inside; Eddy left, and we went to class.

By lunchtime we had forgotten the incident that morning; Eddy didn't come to school. A couple of days later, we were at the holidays. The spring semester was over; Eddy still hadn't come back to school. One seemed to miss him. In March, he came up one day, but didn't stop at school. Someone hollered to him, "How's Eddy?" He didn't answer, and we all went off, like an inside joke.

I saw Eddy maybe a half dozen times during my senior year. He didn't really know anyone; he ignored us, and we ignored him. We had no reason to talk to him. One day, somebody asked, "I wonder where Eddy is." "Who cares?" was the response. Eddy was sadder; he used to have a blinding smile; now he looked melancholic.

The next year at Christmas I was at college, reading the afternoon paper. An accident section I noticed a hit-and-run case; the night before Eddy had been hit while walking on a street; he died before anyone from his city paid for his burial.

Brian J. Gross is a senior economist.



It's your turn

Women athletes deserve kitchenettes

Editor:

I would just like to comment on the issue over kitchenettes and study lounges made for the women athletes in the basement of Mosher Hall. I think it is only fair that the female athletes of this campus are provided with such facilities.

Unlike the male athletes, the girls are not provided with their own dorm. The funds used to build the kitchenettes were from a donation made specifically for the girl athletes. The women athletes have long practices, often missing the allotted dinner time in the Common's cafeteria. It is simple justice that they should have some compensation.

There was an argument made that the space could have been used for additional drafting rooms and study carrels. I lived in Mosher for a

few semesters, and there are drafting rooms that remain empty and study carrels seldom used. There are many dorms on campus that

lack study carrels, let alone drafting and typing rooms, and no complaints were made on their behalf about the facilities for the women athletes.

I think that it is time we give the athletes on this campus the support they deserve. I don't think that donating one dorm to their specific use is so much. They work hard to represent Texas and never ask for any thanks. I think time that we give it to them.

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