

Slouch

By Jim Earle



"I have a portable fan."

Student makes last school observations

Editor:

Upon preparing to walk across the stage this Saturday at G. Rollie White Coliseum, there are a few observations in regard to teaching practices at this school that I'd like to pass on. During the past four years I've spent as a mechanical engineering major, I've heard a lot of complaining about the antics of mechanical engineering professors: sometimes unfair, but oftentimes very well founded. A look should be taken at why this is so.

Out of a total of about 60 professors in the Department of Mechanical Engineering, there are at least a handful that have built up very harsh reputations with the

ly. It should be pointed out that there are many instructors at this University who are very effective teachers and maintain excellent rapport with students, even ones they've never taught.

In regard to the technology of engineering education, there are a few seldom-used tactics that I feel would help to lighten the burden of relating subjects like solid mechanics and thermodynamics. First, it is often the case that one student can often relate a particular concept or problem solution to another student better than can a seasoned professor, who may be unaware of his tendencies to skip over the subtleties involved.

If the practice of students helping each other learn was formally employed by instructors, the traditional learning process could be appreciably improved upon. Second, gaining a working knowledge of an engineering discipline is like learning to play the piano: competence is gained only after much practice over a period of time. In several problems courses I have had, the homework problems assigned were just hard enough to puzzle most of the class and were far from sufficient in number to produce a good working knowledge of the material. I feel that a student's time is much more effectively spent in seeing simply the strategy used in solving a good number of the problems, and not in sitting and staring at a problem that only bogs him down.

Finally, the Department of Mechanical Engineering could relieve some of the alienation between it and its students by simply giving some consideration to student input. If the teacher evaluations completed by many of the classes at the end of the semester carried any weight, several of the tensions that exist now would have been relieved long ago. It makes no sense to provide educational services without virtually any attempt to understand how effectively they are being administered.

Dorsey George
Class of '82

The Battalion

USPS 045 360

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The Battalion is published three times a week — Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday — during Texas A&M's summer semesters, except for holiday and examination periods, when it is published only on Wednesdays. Mail subscriptions are \$16.75 per semester, \$33.25 per school year and \$85 per full year. Advertising rates furnished on request.

Our address: The Battalion, 216 Reed McDonald Building, Texas A&M University, College Station, TX 77843.

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Columns and guest editorials are also welcome, and are not subject to the same length constraints as letters. Address all inquiries and correspondence to: Editor, The Battalion, 216 Reed McDonald, Texas A&M University, College Station, TX 77843, or phone (713) 845-2611.

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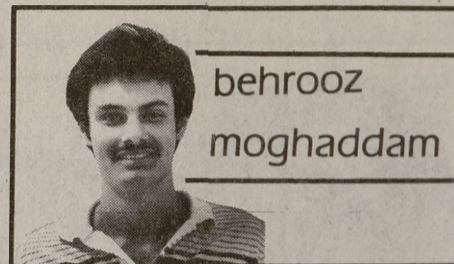
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Effects of American amnesia

Once upon a time, hundreds of thousands of foreigners fled their old countries and repression, and on weather-beaten boats set sail for the New World. In their desperation, they risked all the perils awaiting them in the uncharted waters ahead. Many died en route from starvation, disease and blood-thirsty pirates, while those who endured the voyage had little life left at its end. And yet they came, wave after wave, in search of milk and honey. They had heard of the land of opportunity.

On arrival, the American natives, having known only the fruits of plenty, were initially perplexed by the onslaught of these sickly appearing foreigners, unable to understand the deprivations the newcomers complained of. The foreign languages and customs were comical and ridiculous to hear and see.

Soon, however, suspicion of the immigrants seized the natives as they began to fear the loss of land and food. Curious sympathy turned into determined resentment. And as open hostility heightened, foreigners became "ferreigners" who had to "go back home." The chief of



the tribes imprisoned the unwelcomed guests, freeing them later only to be shipped back to the places they feared most.

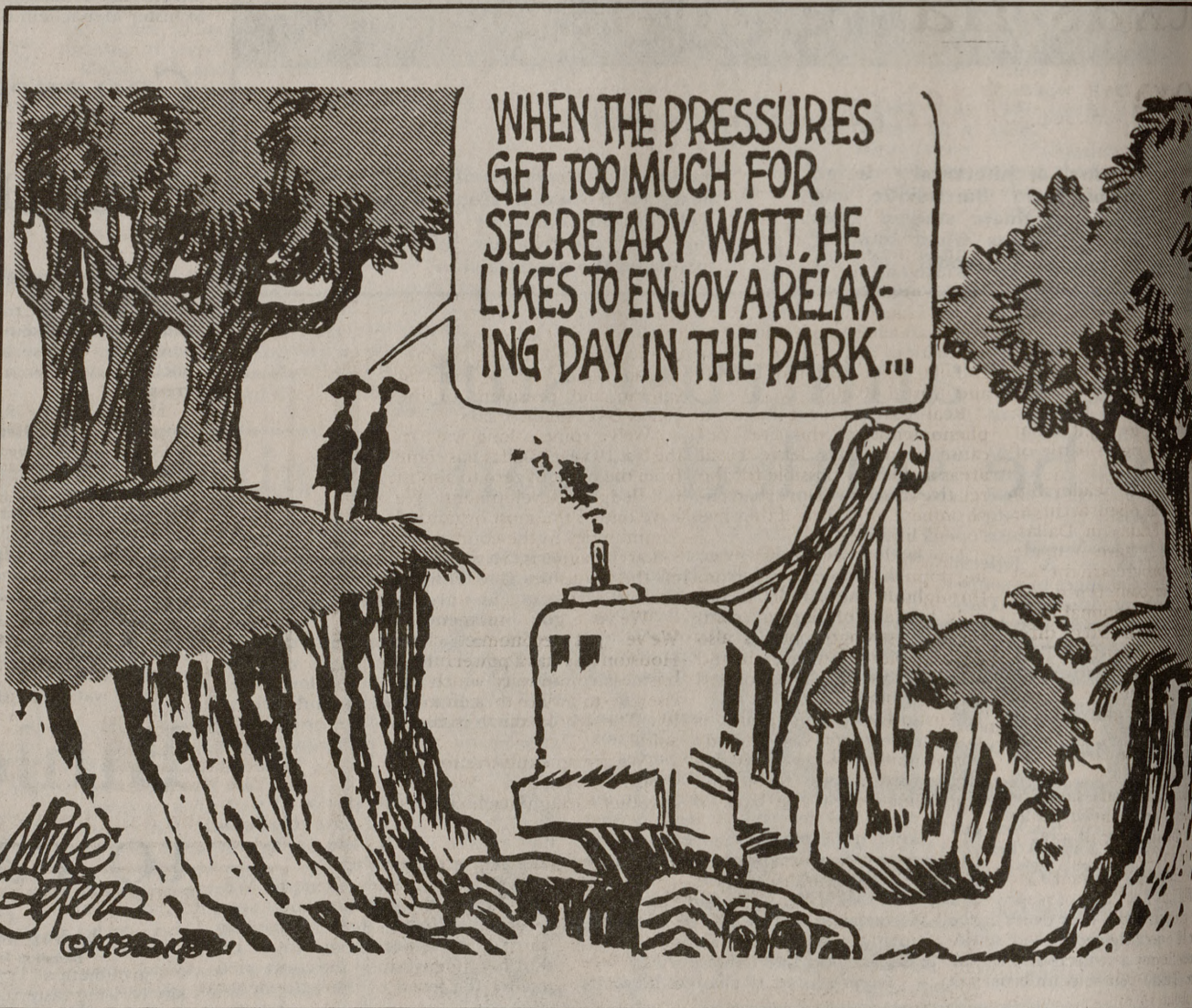
The immigrants in this short story could easily be the French, Irish or Italians who crossed the oceans in the 18th and 19th centuries. But, they are not. Rather, they are the Indochinese, Cubans and Haitians who only a few years ago dreamed of the New World. And, the natives could easily be the harsh realities that awaited the first pilgrims over 200 years ago. But, they are not. Rather, they are the Americans of the

20th century.

In searching for explanations, particular sticks out.

During the course of America's unceded growth, Americans have really forgotten what made this country great. More specifically, they have forgotten that it was the melting pot of disparate foreigners that propelled this country into its political and economic majesty of today; that it was their freedom and recent memory of repression which produced the American constitution; and that it was their hard work that formed the basis of the ensuing economic boom in this country. The immigrants of today continue to bring with them these very qualities.

Finally, the effects of this amnesia could very well be fatal. Not only millions of oppressed people left without a home — but America itself is threatened. For when Americans can no longer remember what first motivated their political and economic strength, they are losing that very strength. And the World as such will inevitably become the Old World.



Appreciation of English prof

Editor:

A professor at a major university like Texas A&M needs the ability to teach. However, with the large amounts of research performed here, this ability is becoming harder to find. Some teachers are unable to explain the material to the students so that the subject can be understood. Others have no spare time for their students outside of class. As if this were not enough, some teachers just do not seem to care.

Each semester students are asked to evaluate their teachers. How much weight these evaluations carry is questionable. Every marginal teacher I have had in my four years at this University is still here, while one of the few truly good teachers, Dr. Charles Harrison, is about to leave. This is not his own choice. He is not being offered a job in the fall. This saddens me, and I am sure also affects a majority of the students Dr. Harrison has taught.

Dr. Harrison, visiting assistant professor of English, is one of the rare individuals who truly has a knack for teaching. He possesses a thorough knowledge of his subject, and the wit to impart this knowledge. He is willing to talk with and help students with any academic or personal problems. In short, he honestly cares about his students.

I feel privileged and fortunate to have had Dr. Harrison as a teacher. The students are the people who lose when a teacher the caliber of Dr. Harrison is not rehired. I can only hope that his future employer has the sense to appreciate his merits.

Bill Gouldin '81
Ben Bonin '82



staff photo by Octavio Garcia

Dr. Charles Harrison got a surprise at the start of his English class. Harrison's contract with the University ends this summer, and a group of his fun-loving students

decided to surprise him with a singing telegram. Despite the surprise, Harrison continued to teach with the class.