

## Freedoms include right not to pray

Considering the Dallas Cowboys' somewhat sudden fall from National Football League supremacy, it's understandable that coach Tom Landry would do anything he could to get on God's good side.

But wouldn't just a few solitary rap sessions with the Lord do the trick?

Landry doesn't seem to think so. He joined Joe Gibbs, coach of the Washington Redskins, in calling for a constitutional amendment that would permit prayer in public schools.

"When we removed God from our public schools, I think what we did was accelerate the moral decay of our country," Landry said.

Has God left the halls of our schools? Who forced the Almighty to leave? Surely the Supreme Court doesn't have the power to ban God from our schools.

What the Supreme Court ruling did was allow individuals the right not to take the time to pray in a Judeo-Christian style — a type of worship an indi-

vidual is still free to practice without a required prayer time.

The Battalion Editorial Board is not opposed to prayer in public schools. The First Amendment guarantees religious freedom — no one can stop you from praying if you want to.

But at the same time, no one should be able to force you to pray if you don't want to. Organized prayer sessions, sanctioned by the school, could use the power of authority figures and peer pressure to do just that.

The Battalion Editorial Board opposes the potential element of force involved in organized school prayer.

The right to pray — and the right not to pray. The First Amendment protects both.

So if Tom's children wish to pray, let them do it privately — at home, during their recesses or silently — rather than force those children who prefer not to worship during school hours to do so.

— The Battalion Editorial Board

## Orange paranoia a petty complaint

Just when it seems Texas A&M is almost over its paranoia about the University of Texas, something else happens to shatter the illusion.

This time it wasn't who has more National Merit Scholars, more Nobel prize-winning professors, more money or more degrees. No. Nothing so important.

This time it was the color used on the front page of Friday's Battalion: orange.

And at least one old Ag found orange objectionable.

When editors of The Battalion de-

cidated to use orange on the front page, we were afraid that some people might think like that. But as I told the somewhat irate phone caller: "I like to think we're above that."

Apparently we're not. It's so incredibly petty to consider everything orange in poor taste because it's the school color for the UT Longhorns.

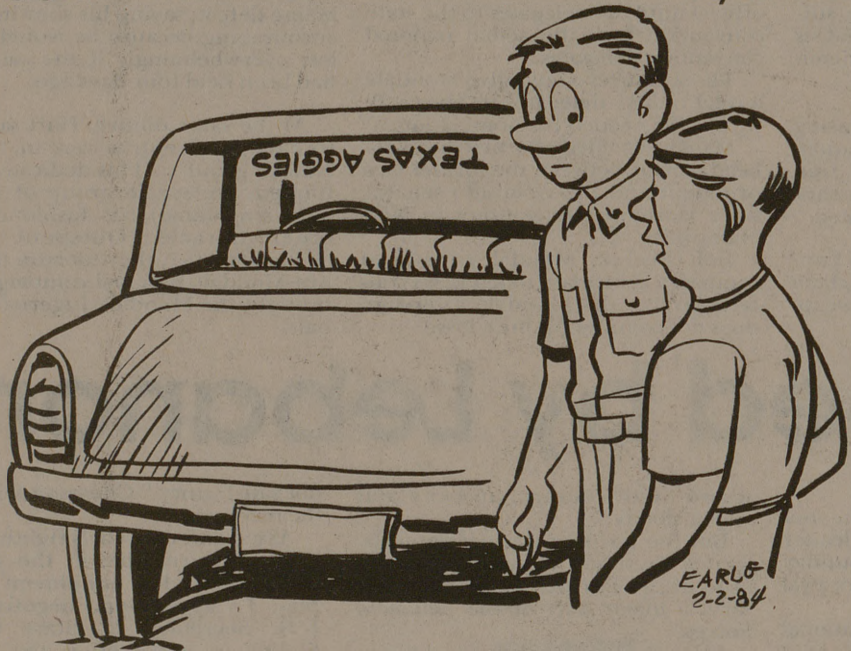
Texas A&M has plenty of arenas for competition with UT, and plenty of opportunities to be paranoid.

Color isn't one of them.

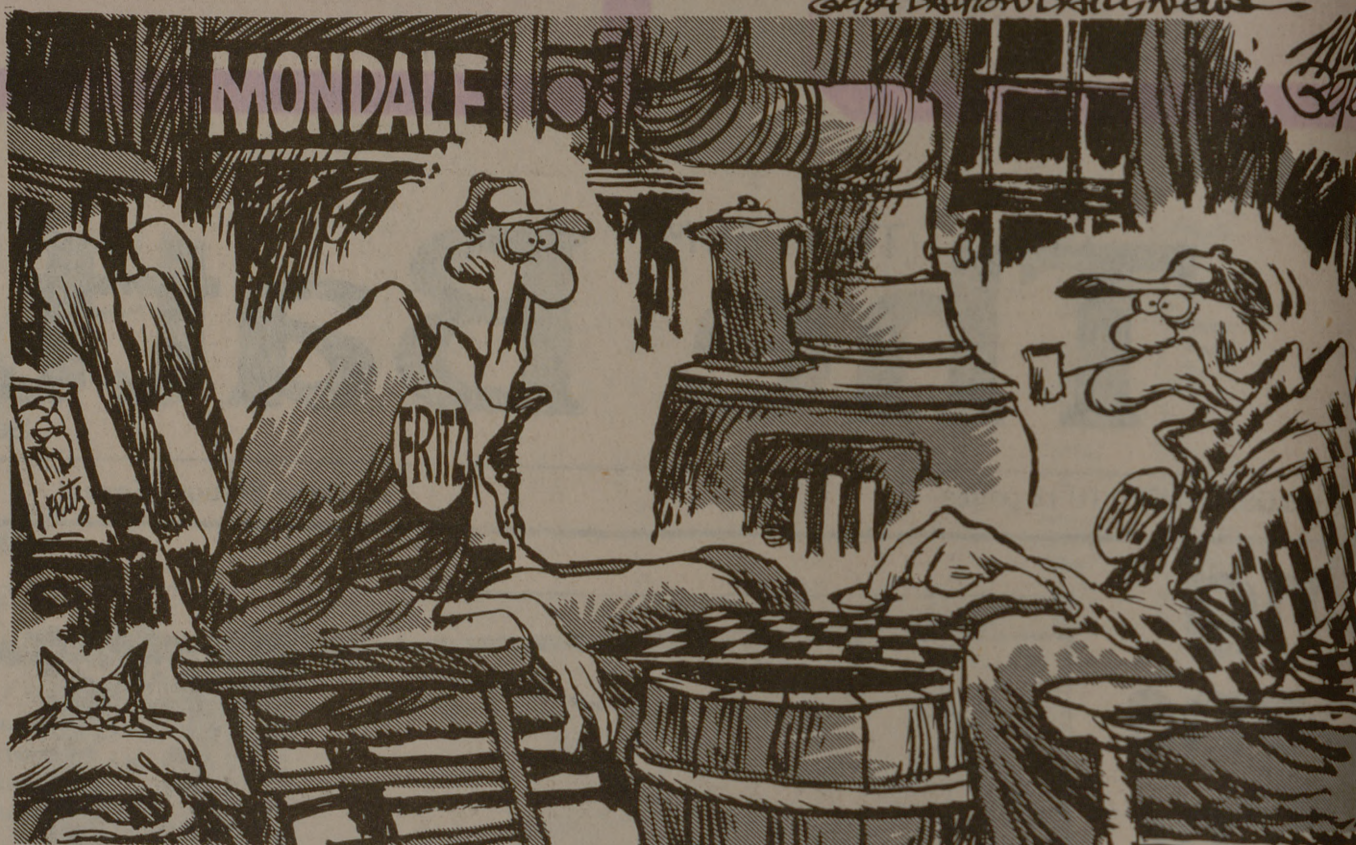
— The Editor

Slouch

by Jim Earle



"What's wrong with it? Isn't that the way it's spelled?"



THAT'S FUNNY,, MONDALE PROMISED ME THE AMBASSADOR TO THE COURT OF ST. JAMES, TOO,,

## SWAMP served a purpose

The cretins from the SWAMP seem to have shriveled into their shells and slithered underground. Those long-hair pinko-radical baggies — born-again Aggies — seem to have disappeared from the Texas A&M campus.

The group is still a recognized student organization, but SWAMP surely has lost the zing that caused a University administrator to call its members, "them SWAMP people."

SWAMP (a.k.a. Students Working Against Many Problems) was founded by long-time residents of the Bryan area as a forum to express fresh ideas, with the hope of bringing attention to significant issues through humor and debate.

What does that mean? SWAMP was formed to stir up a little bit of controversy about subjects that should interest people in the area, but don't.

And why was a group whose purpose was to stir people up recognized on this ultra-apatetic campus?

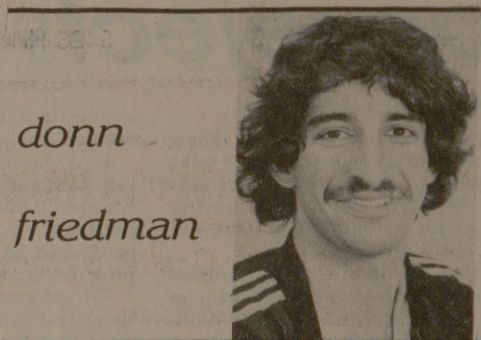
Maybe it was because the system lawyers knew better than to grapple over First Amendment rights. Or maybe, it was because SWAMP's main activity wasn't to counsel or aid people in areas dealing with sexual preference.

SWAMP members took part in many interesting activities during their heyday. They had a 'Bum Bright Appreciation Day' to help remind students of some of the dubious accomplishments of The Head Regent, such as hiring one football coach before firing another. And they attended Regents meetings from time to time — usually the only students in attendance other than Battalion reporters.

They had rallies against nuclear weapons. They fought and beat the MSC Council over the right to display

items in the square display cases in the front of the MSC that the council didn't approve of. And they collected food and clothing to take to the mission in downtown Bryan.

But the organization's picture in the 1983 AggieLand shows what SWAMP stood for. In this picture, the members of the group are floating above one of the signs ordering people not to walk on the MSC grass.



Donn Friedman

They weren't against time-honored traditions, per se, but they were against forcing people to take part in them. Once a person's right to not take part is taken away, the tradition is not a tradition — instead it is an order.

It's easy to be labeled a left-wing radical on a neo-conservative campus, but the members of SWAMP were far from radical. It was, in best terms, a pseudo-intellectual group of college thinkers.

And what they tried to accomplish was to make students, faculty and administration recognize that conflicts exist around us and around the world. These conflicts merit each and every person's attention.

A member of student government had it right when he wrote a letter to SWAMP which said in part: "I know guys do good, in your own way."

SWAMP members didn't agree on every issue — that would have diminished the worth of the organization — they did discuss. And they questioned their own values.

Even though discussion may not always lead to settlement of an issue, the individual and society benefit from an open debate.

As John Milton wrote in Areopagitica during the 1600's:

"And though all the winds of doctrine were let loose to play upon the earth, it would not be the TRUTH that is in the field, we do not know, seriously, by licensing and prohibiting, to mislead the truth, or a slump in the near future. I'm recruiting many of whose young during the when the militia popular," Burton said.

SWAMP has the same purpose as the editorial board — to encounter and debate issues. The opinions expressed are not always accepted by the majority and a solution may not always be found, but thought will be encouraged and promoted.

By the way, a few members of SWAMP were behind "The Battalion" parody of The Battalion, but have graduated and moved on.

And so, it seems, Texas A&M is again safe and secure from the disturbing currents of new ideas, occupying a place that an institute of free thought should hold.

Donn Friedman is a senior journalism major and sports editor for The Battalion.

Terrell T. Gibbs

## Letters

### Editorials air gripes

**Editor:** The article Feb. 29, entitled "No Excuse for Risks Like Falling Metal" was the Battalion Editorial Board's piece de resistance. Of course, there is no excuse — that is what makes an accident!

One of the components of every one of their articles is to provide a "solution" to their life-or-death "problems"; their solution to this one was to tie down all equipment on top of buildings in case of high winds.

We can imagine the situation now — two men working on top of Blocker are about to go on lunch break and one says to the other, "Hey, Joe, do you think there is going to be a gust of wind that will blow that heavy piece of equipment down today? Maybe we better tie it down!"

And what will the editorial be about the next day when a student trips over a curb and breaks his ankle?

"Oh, sure, handicapped persons can use ramps all the time, but regular pedestrians have to step down curbs and risk possible injury everytime! We feel that all curbs should be spray-painted red with the word "Curb" on it in white to prevent any further accident such as this one!"

If the Board wrote only one or two editorials a week that stated well-founded and better written opinions and didn't use their space to air gripes, they might have more credibility. This also would prompt more thought-provoking letters to the editor. Presently, the only letters we have read written in response to the Board have been in similar genre of this letter. We hope this letter will make an impact in their future editorial style.

Carol Caldwell  
Dee Little  
Class of '87

### EDB tests are valid

**Editor:** With reference to Prof. Zingaro's remarks in The Battalion Feb. 28, I agree that the seriousness of the EDB health issue has been oversold in the media.

I also agree that unseemly haste in the elimination of EDB could well lead to increased hazards.

However, the carcinogenic effects of EDB in animal tests are not, as Zingaro suggested, a result of the high doses of EDB used. In general, it has not been

possible to reproduce the effects of carcinogenic substances with nonspecific irritants.

In addition, the high-dose protocol for determination of carcinogenicity has been repeatedly reevaluated, most recently by a panel of the National Academy of Sciences in connection with the saccharin issue.

The panel concluded that such tests are valid in distinguishing carcinogens from noncarcinogens, but that it is difficult to extrapolate such results to determine the potency of a substance in producing cancer in humans. Indeed, at the present time, the only reliable method of determining the carcinogenic potency of a substance in humans is by epidemiology examination of human populations exposed to the substance.

Unfortunately, except when the cancer produced is very rare, such epidemiology studies warn us of a hazard only after thousands of cases of cancer have occurred.

I am less reassured than Zingaro by the apparent stability of the cancer rate. A substance could produce many thousands of human deaths without making a statistically significant contribution to

the overall cancer rate.

While I agree that there is no cause for panic every time a food additive is found to cause cancer in rats, prudence demands that such substances should be eliminated from the food supply to the

extent that safer substitutes can be shown to exist. The substitution of a dietation for EDB fumigation is certainly a good idea.

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**Letters Policy**  
Letters to the Editor should not exceed words in length. The editorial staff reserves the right to edit letters for style and length but make every effort to maintain the author's intent. Each letter must be signed and must include the address and telephone number of the writer.  
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