

Computers: ways to skip the panic

American society is becoming more and more dependent on computers. The Battalion staff slaves over computer terminals every day to put out the paper. But what happens when the white box in the corner of the newsroom stops humming?

First reaction is panic. Staff members stomp hysterically around the newsroom cursing that "damn machine." That same damn machine helps the staff put over 22,000 words — about as many as in small novel — into print every day.

After a few minutes the situation calms down, and the staff moves downstairs. What alluring feature exists in the dank, dreary confines of Reed McDonald's basement?

Just another computer. So, today's The Battalion was produced with a bit more haste and a bit more aggravation on The Battalion's old computer system — the "antiquated" computer that we all thought had been relegated to use by some journalism class.

But newspaper employees aren't the only people whose lives are linked to — or disrupted by — computers. Wednesday night the candidates in the student body elections also were dependent on a computer to tell them how they will

spend the next year of their lives. Lives which may be dedicated to representing the Texas A&M student body.

Last year the candidates had to wait over a week for the results of the election. What had happened? Was it computer failure?

No, the computers kept humming, but a poorly written program spit out erroneous results.

This year, the Student Government Election Commission didn't rely on its own members to write a program. Instead it relied on an expert. Bruce Stringfellow, a student who works part-time at the University computer center, was hired to tabulate the results.

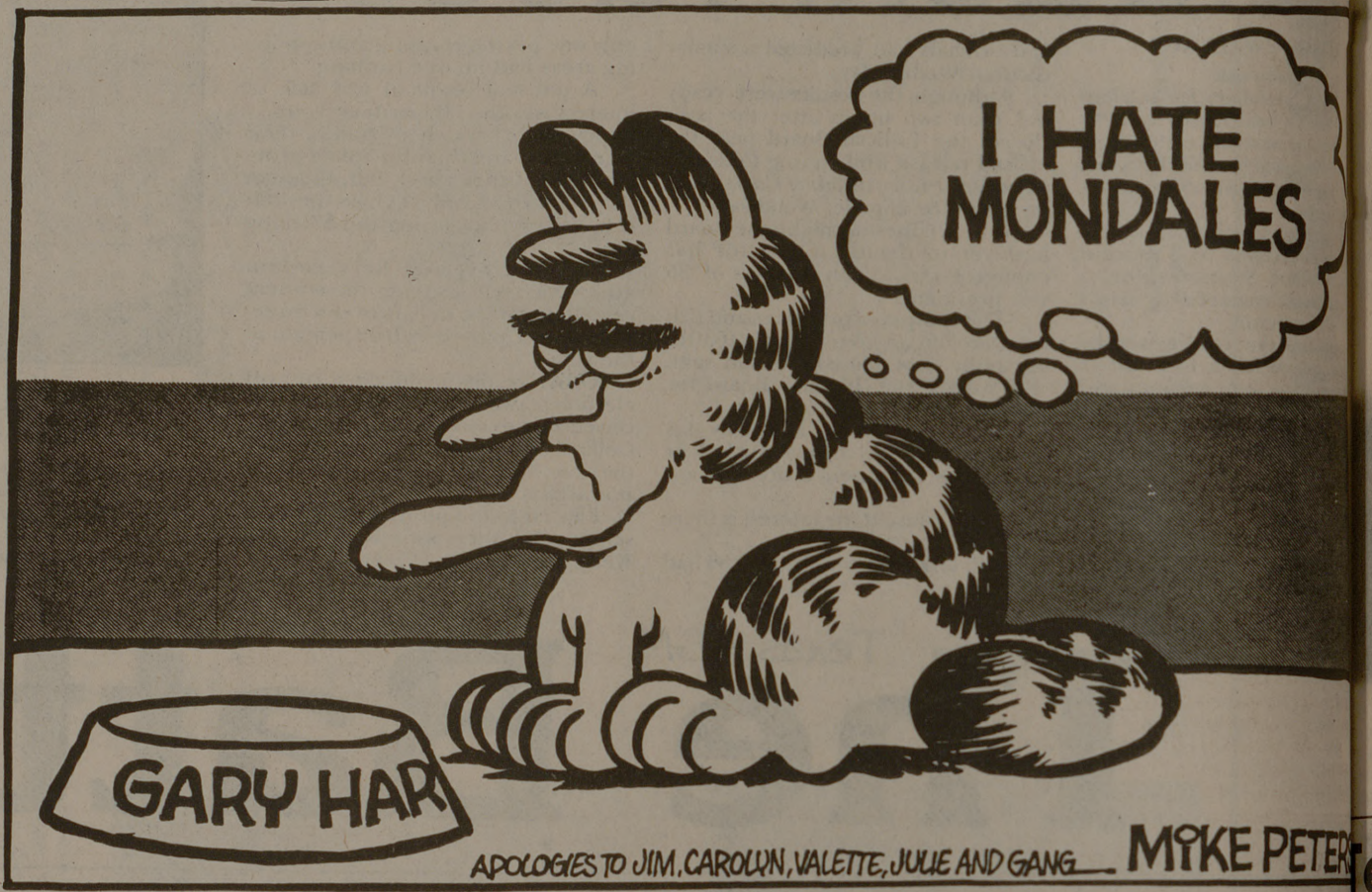
Within 90 minutes after the polls closed, Stringfellow had the election results in the hands of the election commissioner.

And what do both of the incidents show about working with computers?

Namely that two things are needed to deal sanely with computers — as with any tools.

The first, as The Battalion staff has learned, is patience. And the second, as the Student Government has learned in its dealings with a computer professional, is expertise.

— The Battalion Editorial Board



Letters

Ed Board defended

Editor: I'm writing in response to the letter by Michael and Sally Davis in the Wednesday edition of The Battalion. They expressed their opinion that the Editorial Board is "extremely liberal" and therefore non-representative of the student body.

My response is, who says? I don't remember you asking my opinion on the issues, so whose viewpoint are you representing? I also don't recall anyone electing you two to represent the majority's viewpoint. The whole idea of living in the United States is the ability to speak your mind, to say what you think. The Editorial Board has every right in the world to publish their responsible opinions. Hell, you may not agree, but that's what the press is all about: getting you to think. To challenge your cherished beliefs and get you thinking about the issues.

I say more power to the Editorial Board. It's only since the change of editors at the Batt that the Board has come out on the issues. I sure hope it continues to let us know how they feel.

And so for Michael and Sally, you are just as free to write in a response to anything the Board has to say. Just don't presume to be talking for me.

Doug Roberts
Graduate Student, geophysics

Campaign comments

Editor: I am writing this letter in reference to the endorsements of Tom King on the back of his flyers campaigning for senior yell leader. I am the young lady who treated Mr. King so rudely last year dur-

ing campaigning. First off, I was not rude until I was subjected to his offensive behavior. But what really gets me is what is left out of his story. Yes, I asked Mr. King if he was in the Corps, but what he forgot to mention was why I asked him that question. It was not because his hair was too long or because I favor c.t.'s for yell leader, but because he was advertising himself as a member of the Corps. By placing a picture of a c.t. on his flyers, Mr. King was implying that he was a cadet. That was my question! At this point, I was treated very rudely and as a result asked him to leave.

Well Mr. King, I see you have used the same campaign this year, with the added touch of a not-so-true story. Anyway, if you are so eager to see a non-reg become a yell leader, why must you hide behind a picture of a c.t., who has traditionally held the position of yell leader? And if yell leaders are representatives of Texas A&M, then how can we expect you to represent A&M when you cannot truthfully represent yourself?

Sarah M. Wilson
Class of '86

Clean up campus!

Editor: Spring is come, and the campus lawns are becoming green again. Even though nature is bringing the grass and trees back to life, we Ags have left a terrible mark on the landscape. Look around for yourself — coke cans, beer cans and bottles, candy wrappers. The last few years, this trash has appeared everywhere — parking lots, sidewalks, lawns, streets. This trash makes our campus ugly, and it's time for us to do something.

Few among us are perfect and have not littered at least once. We must now

take the opportunity to clean up our mess. Huge efforts like the Big Clean-up are wonderful, but we can do this ourselves, Ags. Next time you're on your way back from class or from your car, pick up a couple of bottles. You won't have to carry them to a trashcan. Go ahead — try it. Friends to try it, too; it really works.

Soon we'll have this place ready for beautiful spring. With parent's and graduation soon, this is a great time to clean up. Texas A&M is a beautiful place, and it's a shame we can't tell by looking.

So please, even though you're an Aggie spirit. Let's pick up the trash on our campus so we can enjoy it next year.

Terry
Class of '86

Society: killer's level

Editor: Society is stooping down to the level by condoning and engaging in capital punishment, a form of premeditated murder. We, the citizen-legislators who have the power to enact capital punishment. Consequently our failure to elect those responsible for murder, especially the death try and perhaps O'Brian. If you're with that, then what difference between you and the man who lives on the street and feels no remorse, cannot live with legal murder, urge you to write your legislators. Gov. Mark White to help eradicate this gruesome practice.

Alice
Class of '86

by Jim E.

Arms merchants facing tough time

By ART BUCHWALD
Columnist for the Los Angeles Times Syndicate

"The Developing Countries Are Slowing Their Rush To Rearm Spelling Leaner Times for Arms Merchants" — headline in the New York Times.

Willy Loman arrived home from his trip around the world, and dropped his two large sample cases in the hall.

His wife Linda rushed out to meet him. "How did it go?" she asked him, although she could tell the answer by the look on his face.

"I didn't get a nibble," Willie said. "It used to be I could walk into the capital of any Third World country with a billion dollars on orders. But now I'm lucky if a minister of defense will even look at my line. I think I've lost my touch."

Linda took his coat. "It isn't your fault, Willy. I heard on the radio this morning the Third World countries can't get leas to buy arms like they did in the go-go days of the '70s."

Willy said, "My arches are killing me. I almost closed a deal with King Hussein for 1,600 Stringer anti-aircraft missiles. It would have made the whole trip worthwhile."

Linda asked, "What happened?" "The king got sore at Reagan, attacked the U.S. and said he'd probably buy the stuff from the Soviets. Hell, ten years ago he was on his knees begging me for anti-aircraft missiles."

"You gave it your best, Willy." "My best isn't what it used to be. Damn French are underselling us in Iraq, the British are telling their Commonwealth countries our F-16s are kites, and the West Germans are giving all sorts of credits on their Leopold Tanks to the South Americans."

"What about Brazil? You always used to be able to sell Brazil tons of guns."

"Brazil's broke. Besides they started their own arms business and now their exporters."

"You never came back without an order from Argentina."

"They got a new government in Argentina. The military junta that was thrown out stockpiled enough arms for

eight Falkland wars. It used to be when I went there everyone in the defense ministry would say, 'Willy Loman is here.' And I'd walk right into the commanding general's office with a big smile on my face, and he'd say, 'Get out your order book, Willy. Have I got a shopping list for you.' Now the general's in jail, and this time when I showed up, they all laughed at me. No one pays attention to me anymore."

Linda said, "Oh, come on, Willy. Everyone likes you. Didn't you tell me the King of Saudi Arabia took you to dinner after you sold him the AWACS?"

"That was two years ago. This time I tried to get in the palace and some third cousin stopped me at the gate and said because of the oil glut, the king wasn't in the market for any stuff anymore. I tried to show him a Northrop F-20 in my sample case and he slammed the gate in my face. If I can't make a sale in Saudi Arabia, where can I make a sale?"

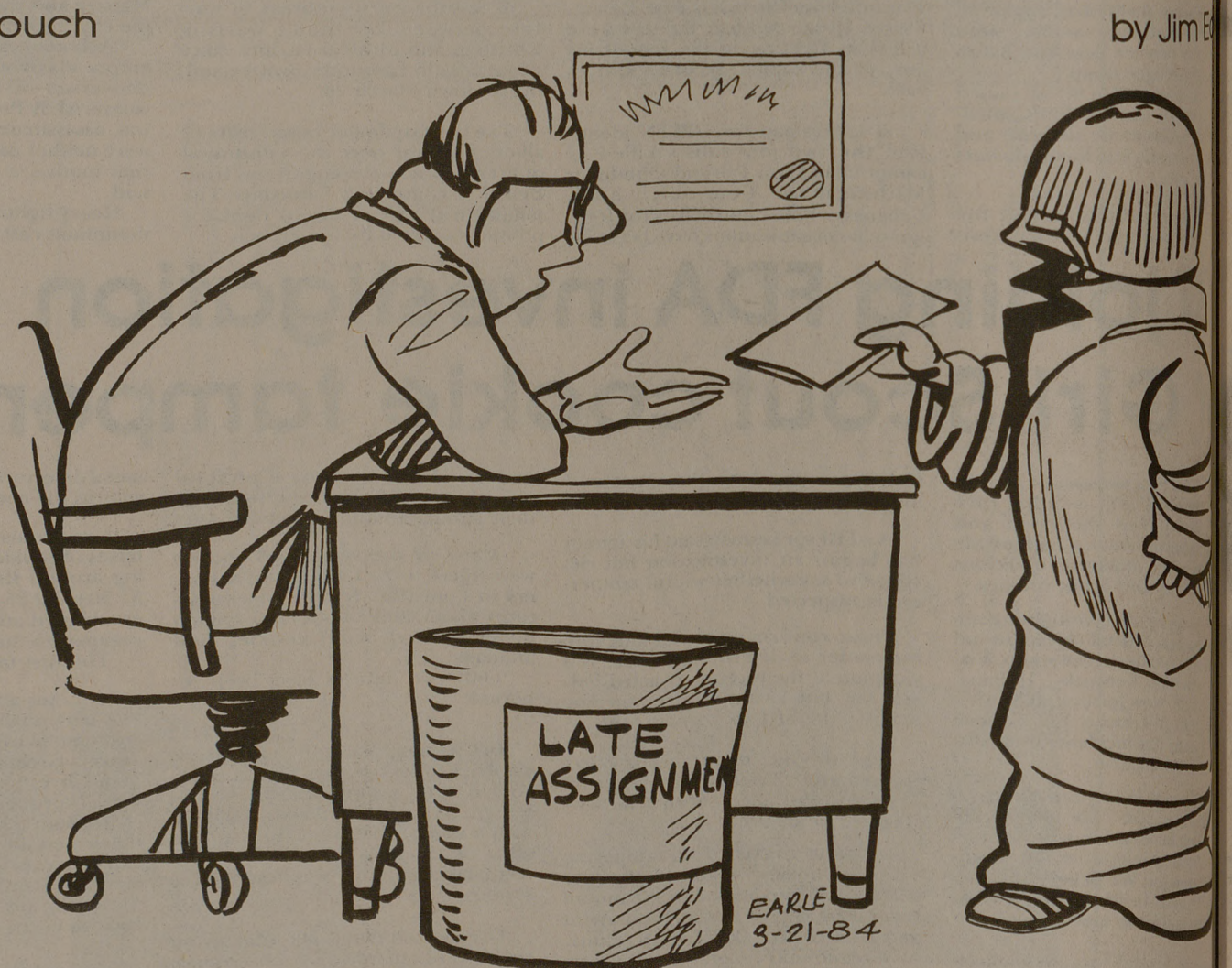
"What about India? Indira Gandhi always gave you an order."

"She used to, but now she's buying from the Russians. I don't know, maybe I should buy a new suit. I just don't seem to have it anymore. There was a time when I could sell a squadron of Torpedo boats to the Filipinos and they didn't even ask about price. Now 10 percent kickback for their orphans foundation, 10 percent for the brother-in-law's church mission in Luzon, and 30 percent deposited to some damn numbered soup kitchen in Switzerland. I can't go back to the home office with an order like that."

"Willy, you're tired. Tomorrow I know you'll get something. I hear the war is heating up in El Salvador. And Libya could invade the Sudan, and they're always going to need arms in Lebanon. And don't forget Taiwan and China, Willy. The Third World is always going to need arms salesmen, and you're still the best in the business."

Biff, Willy's son came in. "How did you do, Dad?"

"Great. I did just great. The king of Morocco told me last night, 'Willy, if I ever get a loan from the World Bank again, I'm going to buy every cruise missile in your sample case.'"



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Letters to the Editor should not exceed 300 words in length. The editorial staff reserves the right to edit letters for style and length but will 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.

Reader's Forum columns and guest editorials also are welcome. Address all inquiries to the Editorial Page Editor.

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