

Electric program benefits students

Every month, a day of reckoning comes for almost every student living off campus — the day when the electric bill appears in their mailboxes.

Most students have grown accustomed to monthly bills of \$70 or more. The only real surprise is the rare occasion when — the bill is lower for some reason.

But come January, students returning from Christmas vacation to homes and apartments in College Station will be greeted by a 30-50 percent increase in the kilowatt-hour cost of electricity — an increase that could cost many students as much as \$40 per month.

Such an increase will cause problems. Finding room in the budget for a \$40-a-month increase in the electric bill — on top of other school expenses — will be difficult.

So the City of College Station is

warning students early, allowing us time to plan ahead and budget for the increase.

Efforts to reduce the shock of increased electricity bills is a commendable effort and an example of good administration and planning on the part of city officials.

The city's energy programs probably will help to reduce the shock of that increase and may reduce the losses to students as well. An education program is now under way to teach electricity users how to cut consumption and minimize costs all electric consumers must pay.

It's in your best interests to take advantage of these city programs and facilities in order to reduce your electric bills and conserve energy.

— The Battalion Editorial Board



Prairie View — more than a sign on U.S. 290

A distinctive, semi-circular brick sign marks the entrance to Prairie View A&M University. Gently rolling hills beyond the sign make the area picturesque.



Rebeca Zimmermann

The interior of the campus adds to the picturesque impression — at first glance.

On my first and second visits to Prairie View A&M, I had appointments — the usual places to go and people to see. I noticed the construction and landscaping work and thought how similar the scene is to Texas A&M's campus. A mall area complete with a fountain, a memorial and friendly students make the inner campus appear peaceful and similar to Rudder Fountain at Texas A&M.

But on my third visit, I took a closer look at Prairie View A&M. What I saw appalled me.

Ripped up tile in a gymnasium for student use. Huge bare spots on the gym floor. No fire extinguishers. No

ventilation except open doors and windows. Holes in the walls.

The gymnasium isn't the only problem. A women's dorm has lacked a properly functioning air conditioner most of the summer.

Tell an Aggie she has to live in a dorm where the air conditioning doesn't work properly and the wrath of a former student may descend.

But at Prairie View A&M, women living in Drew Hall perspired through the first summer session because of a faulty air conditioner. It was hot — oppressive and stifling. And, again, no fire extinguishers.

It's an abomination.

Prairie View A&M is a part of the Texas A&M System and has been for all of its 106 years. But few of Texas A&M's students are aware of life at Prairie View A&M. Probably most Aggies don't really care.

Aggies take things for granted that students at Prairie View A&M would probably be in awe of: bowling alleys in the Memorial Student Center, a swimming pool, a jogging track. The recreation room of the Prairie View A&M Memorial Student Center is a dimly lit, poorly ventilated room con-

taining a few pool tables and some video games.

Visiting Prairie View A&M gave me a new perspective on problems facing Texas A&M. Somehow, a special events center seating 17,000 doesn't seem as important when I think about living in a dorm with faulty air conditioning or sitting in a classroom without air conditioning. A bell tower is an incredibly petty thing to have when the bricks could be used to fill holes in walls at Prairie View A&M.

Originally established in 1878 as the only state institution of higher learning that blacks could attend, the university was neglected for most of its history. A victim of the "separate but equal" ruling that allowed Texas to get away with segregated schools, Prairie View A&M needs millions of dollars for facilities and programming to be a competitive institution.

The System and Prairie View A&M are pouring millions of dollars — \$55 million for starters — into improvements. So the System isn't neglecting Prairie View A&M anymore.

Perhaps the biggest crime — that of ignorance — is committed by Texas A&M students, who know Prairie

View A&M only as a signpost on the way to Houston (on Highway 290). Students certainly wouldn't know how many students Prairie View A&M has (about 4,500, 92 percent of whom are black).

In one of my interviews, a System administrator asked if Aggies would be willing to participate in a student exchange program, similar to the faculty exchange program between Texas A&M and Prairie View A&M.

I thought about that for a while. My conclusion? No way.

I know a few students who would be willing to do it for philosophical reasons and a genuine desire to experience new things. But most students would say forget it until Prairie View A&M improves its programs and facilities — a reasonable objection.

But it's a good idea.

Texas A&M has become extremely conscious of the need for more minority students and ways to recruit them. What better way to understand minority students a little more than by actually being a minority student?

OK, an exchange program probably is years away. But visits to the Prairie View A&M campus aren't. Located between Hempstead and Waller, it's an hour away — halfway home if you're from Houston.

A little more knowledge, a little sensitivity, some crusading and some pioneers to help Prairie View A&M students aren't out of line. One way to help: vote for the proposed constitutional amendment that will give Prairie View A&M \$60 million over five years and access to the Available University Fund, a part of the Permanent University Fund that finances the Texas A&M and University of Texas systems.

The Texas A&M System no longer ignores Prairie View A&M. It's time Aggies look beyond whether seniors take finals or whether the food at Slick is edible. We can't ignore Prairie View A&M either.

It's as simple as black and white.

(Rebeca Zimmermann is a senior journalism major and editor of The Battalion.)

Closed minds stifling learning, blocking freedom

My first days at Texas A&M were uncomfortable.

Aggies stared at me. I didn't know why, I just knew these strange people would follow my eyes as I passed on the street or sidewalk.



Steve Thomas

At first, I narrowed and stared back; tried to put up a tough front. It took some time, but I finally figured out what was going on:

These Aggies just wanted to say "howdy."

Aggie comradery, when I realized what it was, became magnetic to me; folks here consciously tried to be friendly, whether they wanted to or not.

And only fools reject friendship.

But I quickly noticed a problem. Because of this comradery, this willingness to couch up to one another, Aggies sometimes rejected anything non-Aggie. Texas A&M was their microcosm, their white picket fence of security; not their home away from home, but their home.

And that is a problem. Learning is a process where humans closely imitate vacuum cleaners: inhale everything, then filter. Only by objectively seeing as many sides to as many issues as possible do we stand a chance of finding a semblance of truth.

Without an open mind there is no freedom, no understanding, no intelligence.

This might be a cosmic concept, but it affects everyone's everyday life.

I'm no exception.

I took in two sets a few weeks ago at

Dr. G's. The band was the Big Boys, a punk rock group from Austin. I entered wearing a Hunting Horn button-down, Wranglers and basic sneakers; tossed my British cigarettes on the table and sat back to watch the "weirdos" gather before the band.

I gawked incredulously as dancers threw each other to the ground, and was appalled by the band's lewd, vulgar gestures. This was my first experience with punk rock and I felt like I had discovered a new tribe.

Then I caught myself.

This was probably the same way my parents reacted to rock 'n' roll.

I looked again at the people on the dance floor.

They were just like me, but dressed differently. They were having a harmless, good time, they liked attention (like I do), they liked being with a group (like I do), they enjoyed the mu-

sic (though, as a musician, I don't know how). Basically, they were just folks.

The "slamming" routine bothered me at first (dancers throwing each other to the floor and into tables and purposely running into each other), and I thought the whole bit was too violent.

Then I remembered that the generation just before mine listened to acid rock, ate heroin for breakfast and tore half the universities in the country apart before they graduated and became corporate managers and school teachers.

And the punk dancers bodily carried out a guy who was trying to hurt people and held him until the cops arrived. In 1970 they would have probably held the cops until their friends arrived.

The lesson? I was wrong. My atti-

tude was negative; my mind was closed.

When I woke up, I started enjoying the show (I even danced once). I began seeing them in their true light instead of comparing them to me.

Comparing other people and places to Texas A&M fits this same category though it's of more import. We have to analyze things more objectively, be more open to outside opinions. Otherwise, our complacency will foster our own ignorance, and ignorance is a deadly disease.

So when you hear other Aggies rejecting dissimilar philosophies and cultures, remind them that we can always learn from our peers, even from tuition.

Almost as much as they can learn from us.

(Steve Thomas is a senior journalism major and a columnist for The Battalion.)

O! to be a glove upon that hand

By DICK WEST

Columnist for United Press International

WASHINGTON — The Jackson family "Victory Tour" thus far has been, from all accounts, a smashing success.

But unless the street where you live is in one of the American cities blessed with a visitation, about all you can do is sit at home and mope. The last word on the subject probably belongs to William Shakespeare of Stratford-on-Avon, England, the country that gave us the Beatles, Boy George and other musical delights too numerous to mention.

Q. Mr. Shakespeare, have you gotten your ticket yet?

A. "Dead, for a ducat, dead! There's but a shirt and a half in all my company. Will the line stretch out to the crack of doom? The cry is still, 'They come!'"

Q. You suspect, then, that someone is making a bundle off this tour?

A. "More water glideth by the mill

than wots the miller of Saint-seducing gold. Seven hundred pounds and possibilities is goot gifts. Renumeration! That's the Latin word for three farthings."

Q. Hah! Three farthings wouldn't get you a seat in the back row. Is it true that Michael Jackson is the star of the group?

A. "O! that I were a glove upon that hand."

Q. What accounts for his popularity?

A. "Her voice was ever soft, gentle, and low, an excellent thing in woman."

Q. He isn't a she, sir. But I understand many of his fans are women.

A. "Trust not your daughters' minds by what you see them act. Diseased nature oftentimes breaks forth in strange eruptions."

Q. The music itself isn't all that great?

A. "Season your admiration for a while. Straining harsh discords and unpleasing sharps. Mirthful comic shows."

Q. Maybe its the costuming that gets them.

A. "Two napkins tacked together and thrown over the shoulders like a herald's coat without sleeves. Misbegotten knaves in Kendal green."

Q. Pray describe Michael Jackson for us.

A. "He wears the rose of youth upon him. Toes unplug'd with corns. Seeking the bubble reputation even in the cannon's mouth. Sighing like a furnace, with a woful ballad made to his mistress' eyebrow. Makes a swart like end, fading in music. He has not so much brain as ear-wax."

Q. And the rest of the family?

A. "Almost as like as eggs. A plague of sighing and grief! I had rather bear a kitten and cry mew, than one of these same metre ballad-mongers."

Q. What advice would you give anyone who hasn't bought tickets yet?

A. "Better three hours too soon than a minute too late. Put money in thy purse."

The Battalion USPS 045 360

Member of
Texas Press Association
Southwest Journalism Conference

The Battalion Editorial Board

Rebeca Zimmermann, Editor
Bill Robinson, Editorial Page Editor
Shelley Hoekstra, City Editor
Kathleen Hart, News Editor
Travis Tingle, Sports Editor

The Battalion Staff

Assistant City Editor Robin Black
Assistant News Editors Dena Brown,
Brigid Brockman, Bonnie Langford
Staff Writers Ed Alanis,
Kari Fluegel, Bob McGlohon,
Sarah Oates
Copy Writers Karen Bloch,
Cyndy Davis
Copy Editor Tracie Holub
Photographers Peter Rocha,
Eric Evan Lee

Editorial Policy

The Battalion is a non-profit, self-supporting newspaper operated as a community service to Texas A&M and Bryan-College Station.

Opinions expressed in The Battalion are those of the Editorial Board or the author, and do not necessarily represent the opinions of Texas A&M administrators, faculty or the Board of Regents.

The Battalion also serves as a laboratory newspaper for students in reporting, editing and photography classes within the Department of Communications.

United Press International is entitled exclusively to the use for reproduction of all news dispatches credited to it. Rights of reproduction of all other matter herein reserved.

Letters Policy

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.

The Battalion is published Monday through Friday during Texas A&M regular semesters, except for holiday and examination periods. Mail subscriptions are \$16.75 per semester, \$33.25 per school year and \$35 per full year. Advertising rates furnished on request.

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

Second class postage paid at College Station, TX 77843.