

## Americans shouldn't become Veterans in Central America

Today is the federal government's day off for Veterans' Day. Yesterday was Texas A&M's day to give thanks to those who fought for our country.

It's a time to remember those valiant men who fought and died for our government. Though some of America's warriors may have disagreed with the motives of the wars, they still fought.

But on the day President Ronald Reagan officially accepted a memorial to Vietnam veterans, American involvement in another dubious conflict looms on the horizon.

Administration officials have said surgical air strikes or special forces attacks to destroy aircraft on the ground in Nicaragua are a possibility.

"It's not difficult to speculate as to the most effective way to neutralize them," one senior State Department official said.

So as the wounds over the bloody mistake made in Vietnam slowly heal the nation may be faced with another "police action." How soon people forget the

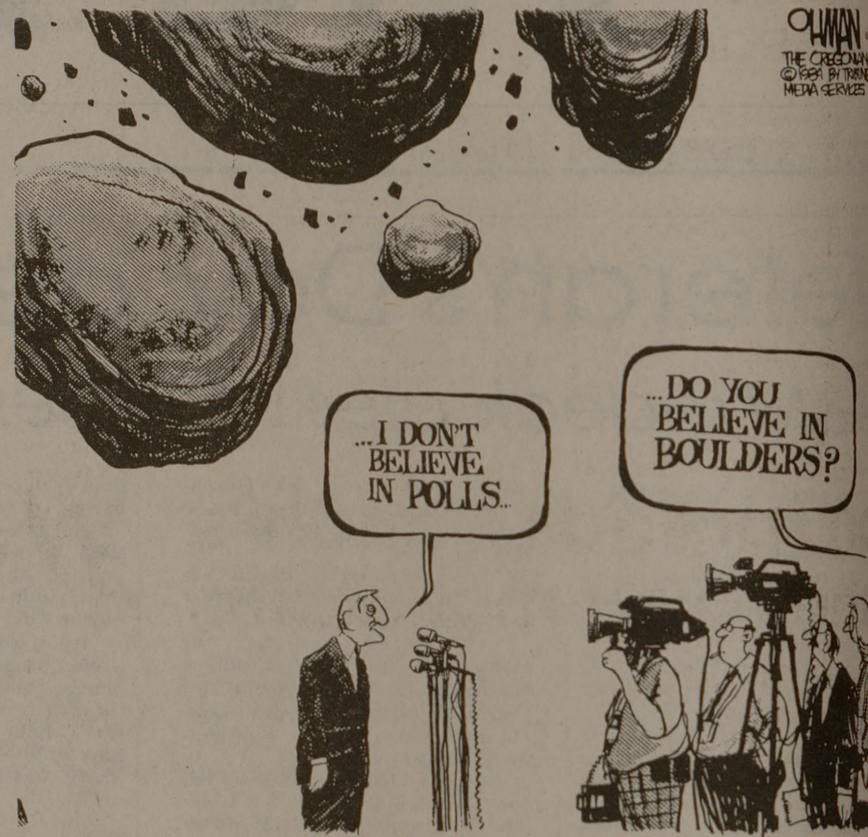
horror of war. How soon misery and pain are forgotten.

One of the reasons for this day of remembrance is to allow people to contemplate the meaning of war. War is death and destruction. The innocent, the young, the old, even the wealthy. They all bleed real blood.

So when Reagan administration officials talk of surgical air strikes, it should chill the blood of every American. Those officials have forgotten about the cost in human terms. There is more to weighing the risks of war than counting boxes on a Russian freighter. The administration should count the number of coffins we will need as well.

The best gift we can give the brave Veterans who fought for our country on this day of remembrance is peace.

The Battalion Editorial Board



## Life behind bars

### Visiting the land of candy-coated cattle

I went to the zoo Wednesday; not the conventional kind of zoo, but an area for animals kept in cages nonetheless. The "zoo" I visited is the Ferguson Unit of the Texas Department of Corrections at Huntsville. The "animals" are human beings.

Loren Steffy

Our tour guide led us into the facility past a lovely Japanese-style fountain bordered with numerous green plants. In the middle of this tranquil scene was a little turtle, listlessly soaking up the sunshine that illuminated this small taste of paradise. Ten feet away from the oasis was a room containing riot helmets and nightsticks.

The contradiction continued. Bill Doyle, our tour guide, started the show off with a traditional bang — Aggie jokes. After the obligatory chuckles, he informed us of their hostage policy: If any of us were captured by prisoners trying to escape, the prisoners would not be allowed to leave, hostage or not. Doyle said it would be better to end the situation within the penitentiary than to "find your partially decomposed body 750 miles from here."

The tour continued and Doyle stated that life was safer within

the prison than without. The Ferguson Unit has only had two murders since 1962. He pointed out Bryan-College Station couldn't make that claim.

Perhaps not, but after we left Wednesday one prisoner set another on fire. Doyle's image of Candyland went up in flames too.

Doyle presented a stern image throughout the tour, making several references to his military career. However, I couldn't help but feel his harsh exterior was a smoke screen. We were supposed to believe the prison officials were these kind-hearted souls doing the best they could with what they had to work with.

We were shown the educational facilities for the prison, of which Doyle, being one of the educators, was quite proud. "It was very rewarding," he said to watch the prisoners progress academically. The unit even provided for the "handicapped" which, on second reference, were called "dumbasses."

The term "dumbasses" was used several times in reference to inmates and their inability to master such basics as long division. Doyle then gave us an incorrect example of long division.

During the course of the tour, the unrest of the inmates could be felt. They would stare at us as we walked by. I began to feel like I was

sticking optical pins through these human butterflies under glass. One inmate sat in his classroom and pretended to shoot every member of our group as we went by.

Doyle kept stressing the humanity of the inmates and how people on the outside rarely consider it. I got the feeling Doyle rarely considered it either.

We were not allowed to talk to the inmates, although no prison official ever said so. When Doyle asked one journalism student if she wanted to direct her question to a prisoner, she agreed. Doyle ignored her agreement and answered the question himself.

Perhaps our tour was supposed to make the prison environment seem harsh, which it did to an extent. Unfortunately, it didn't seem harsh enough. We were only allowed to see what prison officials wanted us to see.

Doyle grumbled about the new laws making prisons more constitutional. "(The inmates) have more rights now than we do," he said.

If they do, or even if they don't, we never saw it. All we saw was cattle on display, which, it seems, is what the prison officials wanted us to see.

Loren Steffy is a sophomore journalism major.

## Confinement makes you appreciate freedom

Short haircuts. Identical uniforms seven days a week. Behavior scrutinized by superiors. Strict adherence to rules and regulations.

This isn't life behind the arches of the Quad for members of the Corps of Cadets.

Daryl Davidson

This is life, 24 hours a day, behind the walls of the Ferguson Unit of the Texas Department of Corrections.

Freedom, a term casually thrown around in the recent political races, takes on a new meaning once you visit the inside of a maximum security prison.

I visited the prison Wednesday as part of what you might call an adventure in awareness sponsored by one of my instructors. Our group of 24 was excited and lighthearted as we stood by the gate of the outermost of two 12-foot, barbed-wire-topped fences.

However, the group's demeanor quickly changed as we were admitted inside the fence by the guard in the nearby tower. As the last one passed through the gate and as the gate was suddenly secured behind us with steel bars, the overwhelming isolation of the institution captured us all.

No more fun and laughter. Perhaps the fact that we were now inside the fences, within about 25 feet of a group of inmates, made

us realize the seriousness of our visit.

After we were ushered inside the red brick walls of the prison, our host, an education administrator, carefully explained the unit's hostage policy: You enter at your own risk.

As we passed through a series of mechanically operated gates, we soon found ourselves in the midst of inmate activity. No longer were we on the other side of the fence. We were in the same corridor as the Ferguson Unit's 17- to 21-year-old population.

We saw an inmate cell block with long rows of 4-by-8 cells, three tiers high.

We watched as the inmates were required to walk within three feet of the wall, in single file, to eliminate crowds and traffic in the hallways.

We saw a large chapel where, twice a year, the mothers of the inmates can come and visit their sons.

We saw the vocational center where various inmates have the chance to learn a skill or trade. The opportunity sounds good, and it is. But consider the fact that at the end of each class each inmate must submit to a thorough strip-search before being allowed to return to his cell. You see, if an inmate has the knowledge, using tools in the metal shop, he can conceivably construct an assortment of weapons.

We also saw the classrooms where the inmates have a chance to earn up to a junior college education. One revealing statistic: About 50 percent of the TDC population has no more than a fifth-grade education.

Unfortunately, most of the inmates aren't able to establish a stable educational foundation. As soon as they become adjusted to the educational department of the unit, they are either transferred to another prison or they are released.

This is life in the Ferguson Unit of the Texas Department of Corrections. This is a life where freedom means a great deal more to those involved. It means more because it's been taken away.

These men are in prison because they abused their right to freedom. They exercised their freedom at the expense of others. Unfortunately, they learned the hard way that freedom has its limits.

As we consider our freedom — freedom to question the views of others, freedom to hold our own views and act on those views, freedom to go where we choose or not go at all, freedom to have the opportunity to learn — let us be mindful of the life of those whose freedom has been taken away. Think of their lifestyle and appreciate your own.

Daryl Davidson is a senior journalism major.

## LETTERS:

### It takes more than bread to sustain life

EDITOR:

I suppose to the uninformed laughter can sometimes be mistaken for crying, music for noise, and contentment for apathy. However, I'm getting tired of people who are uninformed thinking I'm apathetic, because I'm not.

I care a great deal about what happens around here and the world at large. I care about the Corps, I care about what happened to Goodrich, and right now I care when uninformed people like Bill Sparks is able to BS like, "the almost Soviet-like atmosphere, with the threat of swift retaliation by the campus police and the Corps against any breakers of tradition or school rules as a backdrop" when talking about the lack of freedom of speech.

Talking about "uninformed on . . . seemingly important issues . . ." I won't even try to argue all his points, as it obviously isn't necessary. However, for those that are:

One, the reason the Battalion staff is appointed instead of elected is because the student body as a whole is unqualified to make such a decision, mainly because they have no way of knowing the candidates well enough.

Two, the reason why we spend so much and energy on the bonfire, or the bell tower for that matter, is because those of us who are informed recognize that it takes more than bread and water to sustain life; it takes spirit.

Granted, one can go too far, but as a whole the spirit and traditions of this university instills in it student body is priceless. One needs more from his university than knowledge, his needs wisdom and if he can gain it, a spirit-filled life.

For this is the type of person who is able to solve life's problems most effectively, such problems as caring for the poor, the sick and the hungry.

Lastly, where did you ever hear about A&M struggling to attain world-class status?! We already have, and as for our hickish air, we don't have to be pompous to be good. We have got good

conservative moral values, and the confidence that, despite a few uninformed people, we will continue to have a fine university, and be very, very content.

Ken Alger  
College Station

### Help our friend who joined a cult

EDITOR:

In light of recent controversies over politics, women on campus and sexual preference, we would like to relate the following incident:

A friend of ours recently joined a horrible cult. They shaved his head, kept him isolated from his family for weeks at some remote location, hundreds of miles from home, rousted him out of bed at 5:00 a.m., and forced him to listen to bizarre slogans all day.

Can't our government do anything about this insidious so-called Aggie Corps?  
Susan Nickels  
Chris Young

### Student Senate exists to represent, act

EDITOR:

Stated simply, the Student Senate is here for two reasons; to represent our constituency and to act in their best interest. It is unquestionable that the students of A&M possess the intellectual ability to express their own opinion, and it is **this right of accurate** expression that is in their own best interest.

So, a responsible senator should have no trouble voting accurately when dealing with resolutions, since resolutions deal with opinion, the opinion of the Texas Aggie students.

In this issue, as well as the GSSO issue, the student opinion does not support the resolutions. I welcome all input from students who wish to voice their thoughts.

Lewis Frazier  
Off-campus Ward IV Senator

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

**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.  
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