

## True spirit of giving goes beyond home

Here it is, the Wednesday of finals week. Half of the student population is already home with mommy and daddy looking forward to their four weeks of X-mas break. A time to relax with the family, and without a worry in the world.



Kevin Inda

I was first reminded X-mas time was approaching almost two months ago by a local store. X-mas displays up already — I couldn't believe it. And then, the day after Thanksgiving, the X-mas street lights magically appeared. Those city officials doubling as elves must not be able to read a calendar.

Then the X-mas tree lots appeared, followed by houses with X-mas lights arranged in typical X-mas designs. Santa Claus even came earlier this year to grant the wishes of all the children at a local mall — I thought Santa knew if we were naughty or nice and only visited on X-mas eve. What a disappointment.

Everywhere I looked reminded me that X-mas was the time to spend money, take trips and celebrate.

Too bad Santa Claus won't be able to grant the wishes of the famine-stricken people in Ethiopia and other African nations.

Officials have projected that no fewer than 500,000 people will have perished between May 1984 and May 1985, and they are also estimating that up to seven million Ethiopians are "at the risk of starvation."

At one of the relief camps, a spokesman for Save the Children said 150 people were dying a day, but three days ago only 40 were dying.

Imagine seeing 150 of your friends and family dying a day — not a pleasant thought.

The children that survive will still suffer from the drought for the rest of their lives because they will have sustained impaired physical and mental growth.

Experts, including relief officials and Western diplomats, estimate that a minimum of 600,000 metric tons of grain will be needed the next 12 months — so far only half of that has been pledged, mostly by American and European donors.

But, even close to home, people are starving and unemployed.

The Houston Chronicle has been running a daily, front page feature called "Goodfellows," in an effort to generate help for some of these unfortunate people close to home.

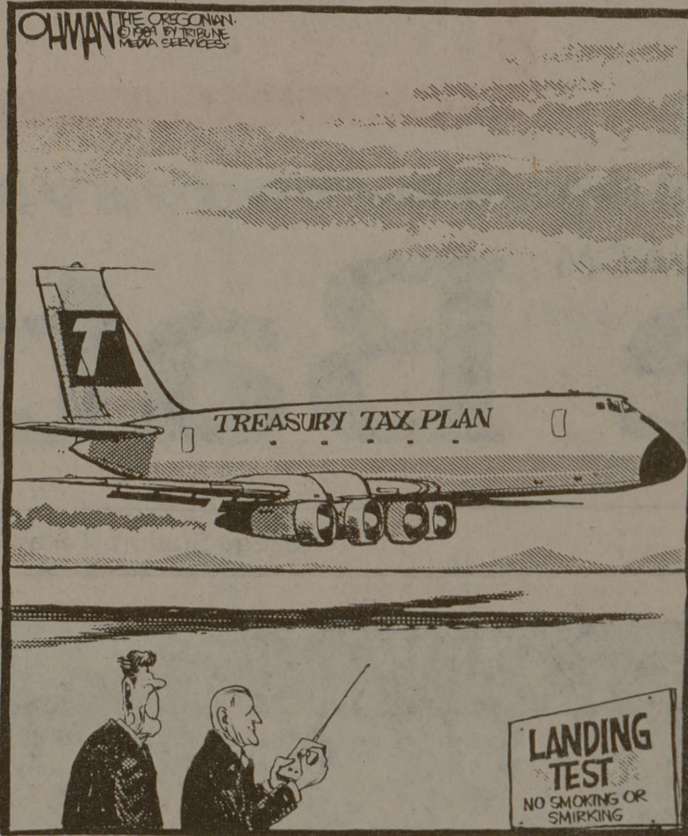
Laura, a retarded teen with unemployed parents, can't understand why Santa Claus is unable to visit her house. Melissa, a straight-A student, can't go to school anymore because her parents are out of work and had to sell the car to get money for food.

The problem is universal and the solution is not just up to the government. Sure, they could build a few less missiles and send food to those foreign countries that need it, instead of arms and weaponry to countries that don't, but that won't alleviate the problem.

These problems, in America as well as foreign countries, can only be solved if everybody gives and cares.

Besides, isn't giving and caring the true meaning of Christmas?

Kevin Inda is a weekly columnist for The Battalion.



## There is life after graduation

I'm tired of fare-well columns.

I was tired of them three semesters ago. During the closing weeks of the semester, every graduating senior on the staff seems to wax eloquent in a column saying thanks and goodbye to everyone they've ever known. It always sounds like they're about to leave this good old world and head for that home in the sky.

I swore I'd never write one. College is not the end, folks. And I suspect it's not even the best.

When I cross that stage on Saturday, there won't be tears in my eyes. I'll be looking forward to the challenges of a new phase in my life.

But I wonder what I'm taking with me when I leave College Station. In three and a half years, I've gone from being a wide-eyed freshman to being a

wide-eyed new employee. Have I learned anything along the way?

If someone asked me to find the derivative of an equation, I couldn't do it. In spite of Bana 217, I'm still functionally illiterate when it comes to computers. After four semesters of German, I could manage a weak "Guten Tag," but not much else.

With some economics and accounting behind me, I have a basic grasp of the laws of supply and demand. But what good does that do me, when I still can't balance my checkbook or keep my credit accounts under control?

The names and dates I memorized to pass history fled as soon as I finished the final. Ditto with the Shakespeare passages I had to recite my sophomore year.

Still, I can't say I've wasted my time. I can whip out a decent newspaper article in 15 minutes and a passable essay in an

hour. Given enough time and the right math books, I can figure out the meaning behind statistics. I understand the political structure of my country's government, and my knowledge of history has given me a deeper insight into current events.

Maybe my future employer won't care about those things. But they will care about whether I know how to think quickly, clearly, and logically.

That's the most valuable thing my education here has given me: the ability to think. Forget the facts, the names, the numbers and the words. Those were only exercises to push me into a higher level of reasoning.

The diploma shows I've reached it. It doesn't show that I have to stop there. Learning is a continuous process.

I have the rest of my life to finish my education.

Kathy Wiesepepe is a December journalism graduate.

## Commercialism makes life tough for parents

By ART BUCHWALD  
Columnist for the Los Angeles Times Syndicate

It wasn't meant to be that way, but Christmas has become a nightmare for parents who feel they must prove their undying love for their children. The only way some fathers and mothers know how to do it is to provide them with the "in" toy of the year.

This was the case when Broadstreet came into my office perspiring and shaking.

"Help me," he said.

"That's what I'm here for," I told him gently. "What do you need?"

"I have to get my hands on a Cabbage Patch doll for my daughter this Christmas."

"Are you crazy? If you need a green card for an illegal alien, I can get you one. If you want a billion-dollar defense contract from the Air Force, I can fix it for you. If you'd like to go on the next space shuttle flight, I'll get you a seat. But where am I going to find a Cabbage Patch doll in late December?"

"You're my last resort. I've been to every toy store on the East Coast, I've advertised in the newspapers. I even tried to break into the Coleco toy factory in Connecticut. In all cases I came up empty. I can't face my Jessica on Christmas morning if there isn't a Cabbage Patch doll under the tree."

"A lot of fathers will have the same problem this year," I told him.

"I don't care about other fathers. All I worry about is Jessica. If I don't produce a Cabbage Patch doll she'll never believe anything I say again." He put his head in his hands. "I've failed as a parent."

"You're not a failure," I told Broadstreet. "The system has failed you. Jessica can't hold you responsible because the toy manufacturer didn't produce enough dolls for Christmas."

"It's not just Jessica that I'm worried about. Every night when I come home my wife Deborah is waiting for me at the door and she hisses, 'Did

you get one?' When I shake my head I see nothing but fear and loathing in her eyes."

"Does she say anything?"

"No, but I can read what's going on in her head when we're eating dinner in silence. She's saying, 'I could have married 100 successful guys, and I had to choose one who couldn't even provide his child with a Cabbage Patch Kid.'"

"You're just imagining things," I told him. "She's probably thinking, 'I wish I could share his pain.'"

"You don't know Deborah. Four of her girlfriends already have Cabbage Patch dolls stashed in their closets for Christmas. They don't say it out loud, but Deborah knows they pity her for having married beneath herself."

"Broadstreet, if you don't get a Cabbage Patch Kid for your daughter, you're not going to be accused of child abuse. Maybe it's as good a time as any for Jessica to learn that she can't have everything in life she asks for."

"Would you like to tell that to a 4-year-old girl on Christmas morning?"

"I guess not. Are you sure you've tried every resource available? I read in the newspaper the other day that if you deposit \$50,000 for 10 years with the Old Faithful Savings and Loan, they'll give you a Cabbage Patch Kid absolutely free."

"I saw the same ad. They ran out of dolls the first day. Someone also ran an advertisement for a \$2 million house in Georgetown, and said they'd throw in a Silver Cloud Rolls-Royce and a Cabbage Patch doll in the deal. They had to call out the police when 600 people showed up. I'm desperate. That's why I came to you."

"All right," I said. "I'll make one call for you to the White House. They owe me a lot of favors."

I rang up one of the president's top gofers. When I hung up, Broadstreet said, "What did he say?"

"He told me to forget it. The Reagans can't even get a Cabbage Patch doll for their grandchildren."

## LETTERS:

### Severing ties could hurt blacks most

EDITOR:

I am writing in response to the two editorials in the December 10 issue of The Battalion on the Reagan Administration's policy dealing with South Africa. I was pleased to see that the Editorial Board brought partial light to the dilemma which all moral countries face in formulating an effective policy toward South Africa's apartheid beliefs; i.e. alienation of South Africa would leave that country no choice but to turn to nations which do not share our belief in equality. There are three other issues though, which must be resolved before the United States condemns South Africa and severs all ties with them.

First, is the very selfish view of our own need for South Africa. Not only is South Africa a strategic military asset to the U.S., but we also import some extremely important minerals from that country which are necessities to some parts of our economy. Second, economic sanctions against South Africa would hurt everybody in that country, both whites and blacks, and it is probably safe to venture that the government of South Africa would place most of the economic burden created by the sanctions on the black population. Third, as political observer George Will put it, there are many factors at risk for the United States to formulate a policy using its people's indignation to justify it. Policy making has to be somewhat above pure emotion to be effective. Those creating a new policy need to take into account all possible consequences to America, the world, and the people that are supposed to benefit from it.

Unfortunately, equal rights in South Africa is like government intelligence and K-Mart quality, it simply does not exist. The United States does need to implement a stronger policy against South Africa's apartheid rule, but before one belittles the Reagan Administration's policy as Cathie Anderson's editorial did, it is important to make a more intelligent, even-handed assessment of a situation which has no clear solutions. Remember, a severing of ties with South Africa would most likely hurt those that need our help the most — the blacks.

David T. McDowell, '88  
Anthony R. Lordi, '88

### South Africa stands for what U.S. against

EDITOR:

The South African ambassador to the U.S. stated in an American newspaper that although his country does have racial problems, the concept of "one-man one-vote" would not be an adequate solution. My question is simple: what is the answer?

Democracy has always stood for one-man, one-vote and for a pluralist respect for individual economic and political rights. South Africa rejects both by its treatment of Asians, coloreds, and blacks. If South Africa wishes to even shed its role of International pariah and join the ranks of progressive Western democracies it must guarantee equal access, both political and economic, to all citizens regardless of RACE.

South Africa is a poignant reminder of what America is opposed to and what we struggle for — freedom, equality and opportunity. Hopefully it will remind us of our past, how far we have come and how far we must go.

I don't know what policies our government could use to reform South Africa, but our principles demand we do what we can. I don't know by what means, but I understand the end, South Africa's system must change.

Mike Cook

### Space weapons only add to the problem

EDITOR:

I am responding to Brian Duffy's letter published in the December 6 issue of The Battalion, in which he defends the implementation of weapons in space.

Where does it ever stop Mr. Duffy? Has this country evolved into such a reactionary state that we have lost all ability for rational thought? These space-based defense systems are not a solution to anything; they only add to a problem that is very nearly out of control. War, of any kind, is now an unacceptable option in this world, because now it can possibly lead to the destruction of everything mankind has ever worked for, and every new system especially in space, raises the tension in an already stressed situation.

In addressing your rhetoric expounding freedom I find that you forget one thing; to have freedom there is one prerequisite: life.

Your systems of war do nothing but destroy it, and quite possibly all of it (if you are truly interested in this issue read "Nuclear Winter: Global Consequences of Multiple Nuclear Explosions" published in Science, December 23, 1984).

I will close with this observation of President Eisenhower: "When we get to the point, as we one day will, that both sides know that any outbreak of general hostilities, regardless of the element of surprise, destruction will be both reciprocal and complete, possibly we will have sense enough to meet at the conference table with the understanding that the era of armaments has ended and the human race must conform its actions to this truth or die."

Which will it be?

Mark James  
Class of '87

### The Battalion

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The Battalion also serves as a laboratory newspaper for

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Letters Policy

Letters to the Editor should not exceed 300 words. The

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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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