

**OPINION**

# Freedom to commit crime isn't freedom

One thing the Soviet Union can boast is a low crime rate. Why? Stiff penalties for law-breakers. Soviet officials take a dim view of people who break the law or in any way rock the strickly-governed boat.

Take for example the three guys who recently caused the filming of "Bambi" in the Crimea to be delayed. It seems the "notorious freeloaders" deer-napped three of the movie's stars and ate them for a birthday dinner.

These murderous menaces will have plenty of time to contemplate their criminal actions during the next four to six years they will be spending in prison.

Granted, Bambi is a special deer and a film and literary legend (or should we say was), but the three men would probably learn more about animal kindness and respecting all life doing animal social work or rehabilitation than they will rotting in some Siberian labor camp. The punishment would do more good if it fit the crime.

But finding the appropriate punishment for different crimes and being consistent in all criminal cases is a problem governments face worldwide.

In the U.S., subway vigilante Bernhard Goetz shot four teenagers and got off almost scot-free. The guys in the Crimea got a more serious sentence for shooting Thumper's and Flower's best friend.

There's good and bad to be said for both sides. The Soviet Union has a much lower crime rate than does the United States, but it has accomplished that goal at the expense of its people's freedom. In the U.S., we have more freedom than we know what to do with, but an astronomical crime rate.

There must be a happy medium somewhere. The Battalion Editorial Board certainly doesn't think converting to communism is the answer, but if Americans would demand that our government crack down on crime more seriously everyone's right to such basic freedoms as living without the fear of being robbed or murdered might be respected more.

The Battalion Editorial Board

# 'Silent vigilante' knows real meaning of justice

Our society has gone vigilante crazy. Pro-Goetz movements have sprung up across the nation. A wave of Goetzian-style self defense is spreading across the subways and high crime districts of America's cities. The phrase "make my day" has become a household expression. Mike Doonesbury has instigated his own little vigilante scandal and Opus has been arrested for bopping a would-be mugger with olive loaf. The violent take-the-law-in-your-own-hands philosophy of retaliation is fast becoming accepted as a way of justice in this country.



Loren Steffy

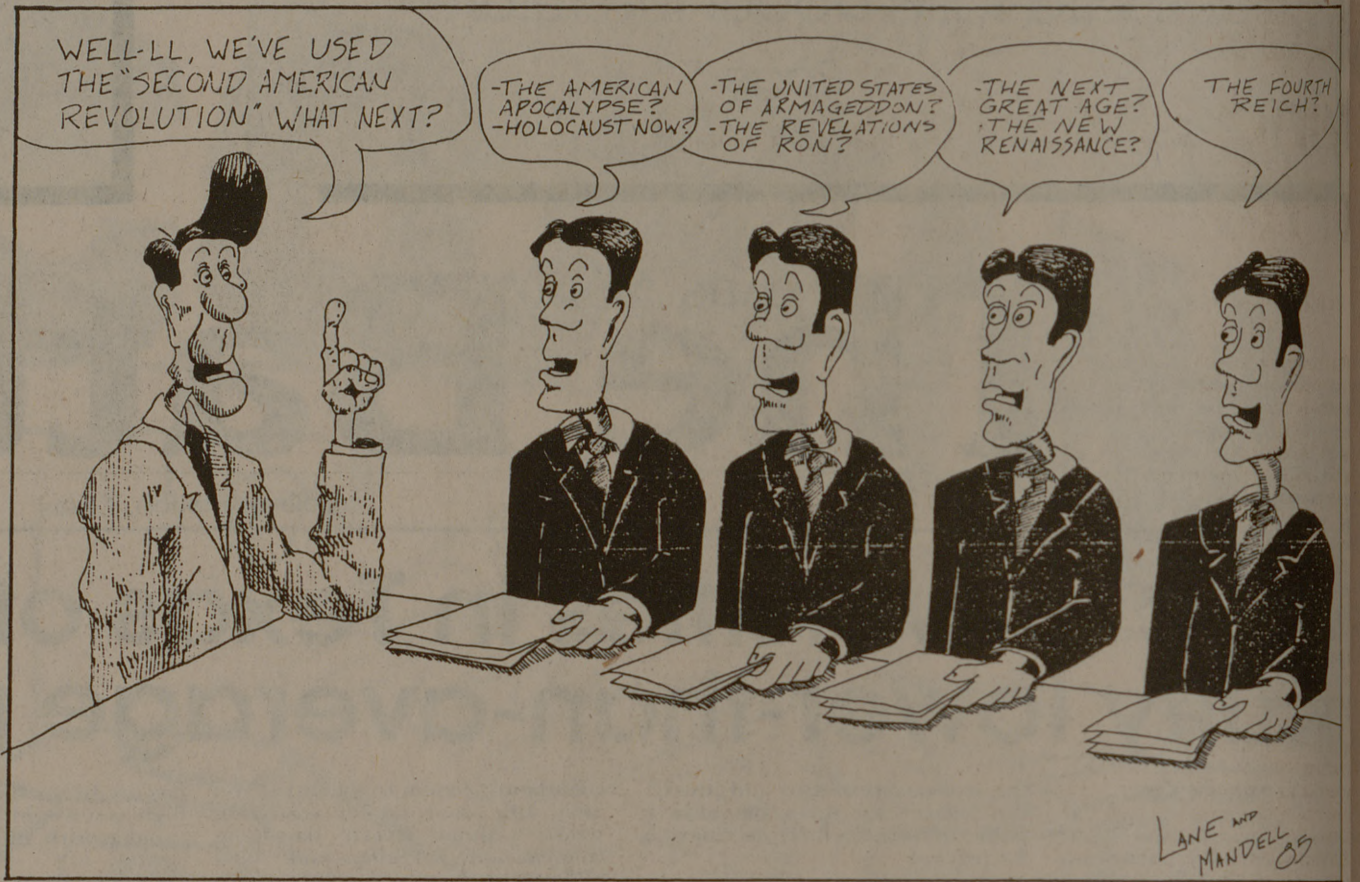
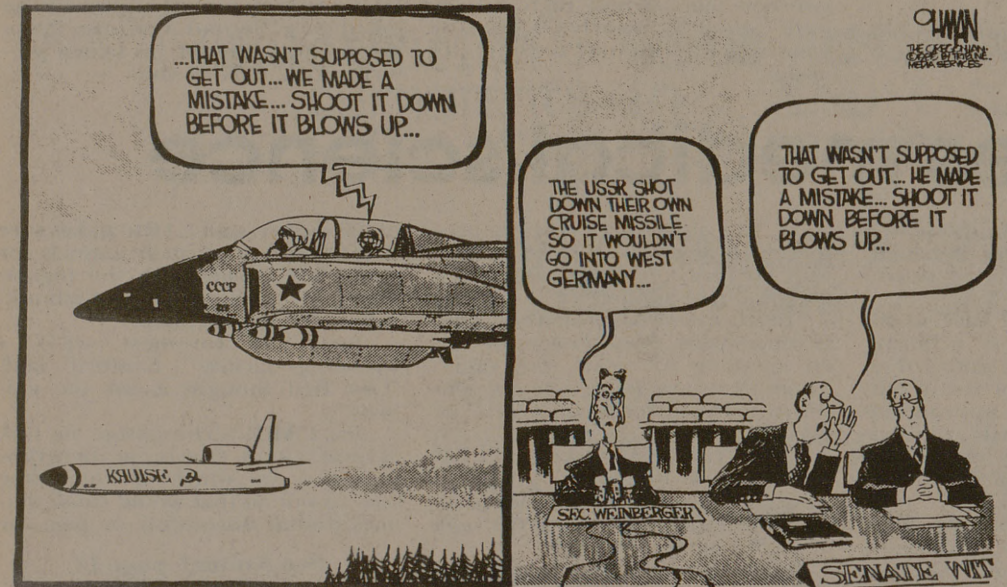
We taxpayers pay a lot of police salaries to maintain justice in America, and the current wave of untrained freelancers is getting out of control. Of course, police can't be everywhere and sometimes self-defense is warranted, but vigilantism is putting many people in situations which require professional training to deal with. As a result, innocent people are being caught in the web of amateur justice gone berserk. In Houston, an innocent man was killed in an act of vigilantism which probably could have been handled by a call to police.

James could have pulled a .45 Magnum on the boy she overheard in the subway, shouted "make my day sucker" and fused the boy's atoms with the side of the subway car, but she didn't. She may even have wanted to rip his lungs out in slow motion, but instead she called police and let them handle the justice in a rational manner.

Circumstances do not always make it easy for us to remain objective about justice. Sometimes the system doesn't appear effective in dealing with crime, but if America's democratic system is going to endure, Americans must have faith in the judicial process. The system works, if we let it.

Do we want a society of Bernhard Goetz, who shoot first and ask questions of the splattered masses later, or do we want a country of Frances Jameses who peacefully allow the laws of society to do the job they were written for? Either way justice is served, but the former is going to require a lot more janitors to keep the subways clean.

Loren Steffy is a sophomore journalism major and a weekly columnist for The Battalion.



# LETTERS:

## Military personnel earn their pensions

EDITOR:

Having just completed reading excerpts of David Stockman's defense to Congress of the president's budget, I find myself disturbed and angry at his personal comments concerning the military's pension program. He attacked the pension program as being a "scandal" and "a disgrace," with military leaders "more concerned about protecting their retirement benefits than they are about protecting the security of the American people." I feel his comments are scandalous and insulting to every man and woman now serving, or who has served, their country.

My justification of this statement emerges from my prior enlisted service and my future intention of obtaining a commission in the United States Marine Corps. I offer my services to the country, as I believe all military personnel do, from deep personal convictions. I believe in the United States and especially our Constitution (with all this encompasses freedom, civil rights, equality, etc.) I chose this with no expectations of becoming materially wealthy, but yet deservedly expect a just salary and pension program from our wealthy nation. The military places severe demands on it's people, separation from friends and family, placement in foreign countries, but most importantly, the real possibility of death in response to our nation's call (recently in Grenada and Lebanon).

The demands made on military personnel are one reason why many citizens prefer not to volunteer, but there are other reasons, such as the desire for financial wealth. Individuals seek this goal in high salaried professions; i.e. doctors, lawyers, and engineers. This, or whatever is their pursuit in life, is natural and from my perspective, is perfectly fine. However, I believe it is vital that they understand and remember the past and present sacrifices made so that all may enjoy the fruits of our society, I would have them question a veteran from World War II, Korea, Vietnam and even the Marines who were in Lebanon, ask these men if their salaries or retirement benefits are "a disgrace" because they are too high. I venture to say their responses would differ with Mr. Stockman's (I sincerely doubt that he is a war veteran or ever even served in the military, but without facts to substantiate this, I could stand corrected).

If a wealthy, prosperous nation in a moment of forgetfulness or even perhaps selfishness, denies its military men a just compensation for twenty years or more of faithful service, one might have serious doubts as to the character of that nation. Fortunately for the United States, President Reagan and numerous other leaders disagree with this tragic opinion of David Stockman. The best defense that any nation can offer pivots on a professional military that display high morale and faith in their country, understanding the importance of the military's mission. This, I would submit to Mr. Stockman, offers the United States the greatest security possible in a world of conflicting, changing and threatening values and ideologies. The

United States has an extremely competent and highly motivated military personnel and the popular support and appreciation the military receives from the American populous helps instill pride, dedication and a loyalty to country that remains unsurpassed by any other nation in the world.

David Burch  
Class of '85

## At Ease coverage to be commended

EDITOR:

I have just finished reading the extensive coverage given to the TAMU Placement Center and our graduating students' job search travail in the Feb. 1 issue of At Ease.

In the years that we have been covered by The Battalion this is the most accurate presentation that has been made. Shawn Behlen, Leigh-Ellen Clark, Mary Cox, and Patti Flint are to be commended for telling it like it is. We appreciate the fair presentation of our office as well as the portrayal of a job search as a tough and serious proposition.

Louis Van Pelt  
Director

## Bevo's head theft will cost committee \$250

EDITOR:

Those who attended the All-Night Fair may have seen Bevo roaming the halls of the MSC. Well, even Bevo knows that Aggies don't lie, cheat, or steal, but someone took the head from the costume.

The MSC All-Night Fair Committee worked awfully hard to put on a first-rate program. They rented the Bevo Costume and put up a \$250 deposit which will be lost if the head is not returned!

If you have the mask and wish to return it, you can do so at the Student Finance Center, right next to the Student Programs Office, with no questions asked. If you have seen a large cow head (how many can there be floating around the campus?), please call the Students Programs Office at 845-1515 or me at 260-1678 (my roommate will take the message). We need it back within 10 days or the committee that brought you the All-Night Fair will be out \$250.

Mike Cook

## Stolen umbrella has sentimental value

EDITOR:

It's a sad day in Aggieland for we have to report a theft right here on our campus. It seems that our suite-mate, on her way to class, stopped at the ladies restroom on the second floor of the Academic building. After her class, she realized she had left her umbrella in the restroom but when she returned she found it had been "borrowed."

Please Ags, we know it was raining and you probably forgot yours at home but this is a special umbrella. It was purchased as a memento of her trip to Italy

and its sentimental value far outweighs any monetary value. It is multi-colored with a wooden handle and shoulder-strap.

Should you have a change of heart please call 260-5408 or 260-5208. No questions will be asked.

Donna Brownlee  
Dede Brown

## Battalion ink does have its advantages

EDITOR:

I hear a lot of complaints about Battalion ink ending up on people's fingers. By rubbing the Batt on my windows I have found an inexpensive way to obtain smoked glass.

A good way to deal with the pigeon offerings that cover the benches and the ground is to go the area where it is highly concentrated and inhale the ever-smelling fumes until they fill your nose, throat and lungs! Once you do that the rest of the day doesn't seem so bad.

Karen Stuntz, '87

P.S. Now that they are cleaning it up, I have to buy correction fluid.

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### 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 McNeal Building, Texas A&M University, College Station, TX 77843. Editorial staff phone number: (409) 845-2636. Advertising: (409) 845-2611. Second class postage paid at College Station, TX 77843. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to The Battalion, Texas A&M University, College Station, Texas 77843.