

OPINION

Aggie guns will make your day

Some companies will use the ideal of Aggie Spirit to sell anything. While local bookstores carry more Aggie shirts, hats, coats, backpacks, and other paraphernalia than they do books, one facet of the Aggie merchandise market had not been explored — until now.

A local sporting goods store is now offering a limited edition Aggie Commemorative .45 Colt Automatic Pistol. The gun comes emblazoned with the Texas A&M logo, "Gig 'em Aggies," and the likeness of Old Sarge, and can be purchased for a mere \$795. About 50 of the guns were sold before the ad campaign began.

The advertisement boasts that the pistol commemorates the proud Aggies who carried the "legendary handgun." But it appears that Colt merely wants a chunk of the Aggie merchandising market just like the many other companies who pump maroon and white goods into Bryan-College Station. The gun was conveniently promoted just before graduation, probably to attract Aggies of all ages, bubbling with Aggie Spirit at this festive time of year.

The idea of an Aggie pistol seems ludicrous, but for Aggies who like to enjoy the Constitutional right to bear arms, the gun is guaranteed to make anyone's day.

The Battalion Editorial Board

Only through caring can Plano shake its suicidal reputation

I knew the mixer was getting a bit stale when people began asking each other about their hometowns.

Gigi Shamsy

For 10 years I've been somewhat cocky about my city as I list the years my high school dominated district and state football playoffs.

My ego still balloons each time I am questioned about the size of my graduating class.

"We had about 1600 people in my graduating class. Yeah — no big deal — we managed to fit the eleventh and twelfth grades in five buildings overlooking a duck-inhabited pond."

Things have changed.

Today I receive a different reaction when asked about my hometown.

Sometimes it's a pasty, solemn gaze complete with words of comfort. More often, however, it's a gusty laugh and a snide remark.

"You're from Plano? Isn't that where everyone knifes themselves?"

Impressive remark, I must say. And all said in one breath, too.

Take away the media's hoopla and fanfare over an emerging Texas suburb and ignore the town's plastic tendency to be GQ and Vogue, and then you will see the real Plano.

Then why the sudden and sensationalistic press attention working to sour Plano's image?

Let's analyze the public's response to the increasing number of teen suicides in Plano over the past few years:

• Suicide is not a palatable topic.

The press, however, has not stopped grasping for information about these students who, because of frustration in coping with their problems, resort to ending their lives.

I worked for a short time last summer

at Plano's local newspaper and I was stunned at the number of requests we received daily for phone numbers and names of the victims and their families.

They needed to know the vital stats:

"Who are they? Why did they do it? What was their family life like? Were they doing well in school? Let's check out their love life. Any attempts made to fit in as a cheerleader or a student council president? etc., etc."

I wanted to suggest that these reporters investigate careers with the National Enquirer.

Needless to say, the hype is uncalled for. It only initiates more thoughts of suicide in the minds of those who are confused enough to believe that they will finally receive attention by ending their life.

• The idea spreads when these kids are inspired by what they see on television or what they read in the newspaper about the quiet girl in the back of their history class who is morbidly glorified by her peers after she has died. Carole Steele, director of the Plano Crisis Center, told me about a theory of contagion where teen-agers view a suicide as a romantic way of escaping from life's problems and they take the suicide victim's cue. However, she said the majority of these frustrated teen-agers resort to a suicide attempt because they are lonely, not just attention-starved.

• Steele gave explanations for the media's attention to my hometown.

She said other Texas cities, such as Clear Lake and Arlington, have been in the press spotlight for teenage suicides.

Steele said every time a teen suicide in another town occurs, reporters are at her door asking about Plano's suicide victims.

"The media has always thought of Plano as a perfect, storybook community with very little problems," she said. "When something unusual like this hap-

pens, they blow it up into a phenomenon."

Luckily, the over-eager reporters have been scarce in Plano recently in order for the suicide attempts in the zealous reporting must also stop.

These are just a few reasons why media have flocked down on our school with mini-cams and microphones to devour information on the suicide.

They neglect to see that the issue comes a three-dimensional topic of emotions and family histories competing.

The statistics are not good:

• Eight suicides of teen-agers were recorded between February and May 1984 — surpassing the national suicide average by 80 percent (100,000 people).

• Since May 1984, there have been many suicide attempts, according to records at the Plano Crisis Center. No deaths. They have had as many as 150 people call their Crisis hotline for help, but none resorted to killing themselves.

• Richardson, a suburb south of Plano, has been the site of six suicides of teen-agers in four months from January 1985 until the present.

All that anyone from Plano, or any city, can hope for is that parents place a priority on being with their children over all other activities.

This means quality time spent with children and educational programs which stress positive mental health in the junior high level.

The key is listening and being a friend to a person who feels alone nowhere else to turn.

Only then will the "So-you're-the-suicide-capital-of-the-world" stop.

Gigi Shamsy is a junior journalism major and an entertainment writer for The Battalion.

Must children suffer for Mom's crimes?

A young mother, dressed in a white cotton dress, holds her 2-year-old daughter closely. The guard motions for her to return to the prison and the crying child's grandmother takes her away. The child is crying because her mother has been put in prison, and the little girl won't get another hug for a year, maybe two.

Susan McDonald

Cranford said, "It's not the state's responsibility to provide the people with a nursery."

But why should the children be punished because their mommy did something wrong? Why not punish the mother and not the child, too?

Children, when restricted from seeing their mother, think they are being punished. They think they did something wrong and that's why they can't see their mommy anymore. Older children think they are the cause for their parents going to prison — that they sent them there. This can cause problems for them when they are older. Guilt is not a nice feeling.

It is ridiculous not to let MATCH help build a children's center. The state would not be doing this for the incarcerated women, but for the children who are innocent victims of their parent's crime. They don't care that their mommy committed forgery, shoplifted or any other one of the countless crimes committed. They love them anyway.

The psychological effect of being separated from their mother or being thrust into a prison with all the other people who visit inmates is too great. The TDC needs to swallow their pride and let MATCH help.

This would give mothers incentive to straighten themselves out and the children wouldn't feel like they are being punished or feel like they put their mommy there.

It's just not fair to continue treating the children this way when they are simply victims, not the guilty ones.

Susan McDonald is a junior journalism major.

Right now the Texas Department of Corrections doesn't allow prisoners to have contact visits, even with their children. However, Susan Cranford, the warden at Gatesville prison for women, said that the TDC will have contact visits soon, keeping the two two-hour visits a month.

Is this enough to keep the tie between parent and child strong?

Some prisons in New York have a nursery for the children of incarcerated mothers. A new-born child can stay in the nursery up to two years. In California, a children's center has been built where the children can come to visit their mother every weekend, and the child isn't exposed to the harsh prison atmosphere. This helps the mothers stay close to their children and it helps the children accept the fact that their mother is gone.

Prison MATCH (mothers and their children) tried to build a similar children's center in Texas. When the TDC said no, MATCH offered to help the TDC improve their visiting system.

But the TDC doesn't seem to feel this is necessary. They seem to think that children can handle seeing their parents in prison and that two two-hour visits a month are enough.

LETTERS:

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.

Thanks for the info

EDITOR: In response to the article written by Lorie Woodard, that appeared in the Tuesday, April 30 edition of The Battalion, "Ag majors are people, too" we would like to say thank you for informing the non-ag majors that today's agriculturalists are not just a bunch of "dumb goat-ropers."

As Miss Woodard stated in her column, today's farmers and ranchers must have a working knowledge of everything from accounting to zoology. With today's economic situation in the United States, a farmer cannot afford to plant more seed than he needs to produce a crop just as a rancher cannot afford to feed his stock too much feed and expect to survive. Only through higher education and training can the farmers and ranchers of tomorrow expect to overcome the economic hardships they'll face daily.

Let's remember that when this University was founded, it was based on two principles: Agricultural and Mechan-

ical, and both are still an intricate part of TAMU. After all, the school we take such pride in is ranked as one of the top five agricultural schools in the nation.

In closing, we would simply like to remind you that if you eat, you're involved in agriculture, so please, don't bite the hand that feeds you.

Tom Lester
Class of '85

SG recognizes need

EDITOR: In response to your editorial (John Hallett) on April 29 on the need for better lines of communication between Student Government and the student body, Student Government has also recognized this need.

As a result of last week's executive branch appointments, there is a new Communications Program in the executive branch. The program consists of a Director of Communications who works with a Student Relations Chairman, Internal Relations Chairman and a Census and Research Chairman. Each of these

committees has a specific set of goals designed to promote better communication between Student Government and the student body. For example, the Student Relations Committee will organize a speaker schedule that will address student organizations on a regular basis. The speakers will include members of all three Student Government branches. In addition, the Student Relations Committee will maintain a system of bulletin boards on campus to provide information on relevant issues in Student Government, such as a list of Senators, bills before the Senate and upcoming Student Government programs. A number of other programs will be sponsored by the Student Relations Committee; all will be designed to increase accessibility and visibility of Student Government to the student body.

We would like to thank John Hallett for pointing out this need and giving us the opportunity to introduce the new Communications Program to the students. As members of the new program, we recognize the challenge before us

Tired of fighting monuments? Dinosaur Rex of stupid law

The Blue Law. It's like poison on my lips.

If there is one thing I can't stand, it's not being able to buy socks on Sunday when I need socks on Sunday.

Why can someone buy milk on Sunday but they can't buy a baby bottle to put it in?

Some Sundays it slips by unnoticed, but when you least expect to be hassled, there it is. A monster monument to the past. The Dinosaur Rex of stupid laws.

"Sorry can't sell you that today — Blue Law."

But I can go to the store down the road and the monster sleeps. That's one of the problems with this law: some stores go by the restrictions and some don't. The Blue Law now prohibits a store from selling a list of certain items on both days of a weekend. There are 42 items on the no-no list.

Hopefully the death of this stone-age rule is in the near future.



Cami Brown

Thursday the House tentatively approved a bill that would virtually erase the law as it stands. During the debate, opponents of the bill argued that the Blue Law helps maintain the quality of life in Texas. These treasured Texas values, they said, includes Sunday fried chicken dinners that are important to the Texas way of life.

Well, I can't remember the last time I had a chicken leg on Sunday, but I doubt that being able to shop on Sunday would prevent me from eating one. I've worked many Sundays before and have never felt that I was being denied the chance to eat a family-style, chicken-fried meal.

One bill kicked out of the House would have continued the ban on certain items, but would have allowed the sale of the items during the Christmas season. In other words, the bill would have made it OK to leave out family fellowship during the holidays when business is booming, but during the year we should stay home and appreciate quality life. Thankfully this proposal was vetoed.

So we are faced with an inconsistent law that is past its time. But attitudes have changed in Texas. Not only toward the Blue Law but toward other controversial issues as well.

For example, a public opinion poll showed most people want pari-mutuel horse racing in Texas, although it needs yet to get the support it needs through the workings of the Texas Legislature.

The bill that would repeal the Blue Law seems to have the support it needs and you can bet legislators aren't counting the extra cash it could bring to the state's ailing economy.

Sunday sales would add about \$1 million to the state's tax collections. Not much to the state when a billion-dollar shortfall is concerned, but every bit helps.

The Blue Law is no longer effective. It should be repealed, even if it means that stores only open for three or four hours on Sunday. That would still allow those who would have to work on Sunday time to go to church or have a family-style dinner.

But left as is, the Blue Law makes Sunday a day to fear. Unsuspecting grocery shoppers, unaware of the invisible monster that can strip them of their favorite non-food luxuries, will go unprotected on Sundays if the Blue Law is to reign.

Cami Brown is a senior journalism major and a columnist for The Battalion.

The Battalion

USPS 045 360
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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.

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 \$33 per full year. Advertising rates furnished on request.

Our address: The Battalion, 216 Reed McDonald Building, Texas A&M University, College Station, TX 77843. Editorial staff phone number: (409) 845-2630. 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.