

Opinion

Faculty speaks out

The professors who signed Texas A&M's anti-Strategic Defense Initiative petition deserve to be commended for speaking out against the Reagan administration's attempt to tie up vital research resources.

The petition cites a list of political, technical and academic concerns as reasons for opposing SDI. Those who signed pledged not to solicit or accept funds for Star Wars research, stating that it would be "unethical to accept research money for a project that has no reasonable likelihood of success."

It does not, however, mean the participants have to deny funding completely, but it is nonetheless a bold step from our usually passive faculty.

The petition warns that there is "a great risk of infringement on academic freedom by undertaking research which may later become classified, and such potentially classified research is not in consonance with the stated mission of Texas A&M, a public land-grant University responsible to the citizens of the state of Texas."

By signing the petition, the faculty members have joined the more than 6,500 scientists on college campuses nationwide who refuse to participate in the Reagan administration's largest military money pit.

Our faculty members deserve commendation for joining the national effort to alert the general public to this frivolous distribution of research funding. The Reagan administration has turned its back on the first priority of research — making life easier for the common citizen. Instead, it wants to pump billions of research dollars into a military program that many scientists and top researchers — including 15 Nobel laureates — feel is doomed for the scrap heap.

The Battalion Editorial Board



Summer films bode well for box office, bad for stomach

Summertime brings a variety of wonderful things: heat, mosquitoes, sweat, sunburns and summer movies.



Karl Palmeyer

Each summer the theaters are flooded with films fabricated for fast financial gain. This summer we are plagued with such cinematic masterpieces as "Police Academy 3," "Poltergeist II," "Demons," "Invaders from Mars," "Top Gun," "My Little Pony — the Movie," "Short Circuit," "Wise Guys," "Never Too Young to Die," "Back to School," "No Retreat/No Surrender," "Space Camp," "Raw Deal" and "Cobra."

These movies are garbage in its purest form. Most of them can be thrown into one of five categories.

• Sequels — Everyone, except those living in Hollywood, has heard the old saying: "leave well enough alone." Any movie with a number in the title, excepting "2001: A Space Odyssey" and "Catch-22," is doomed to failure. Sequels, by their very nature, are usually cheesy but when they're numbered it's a sign of new highs in mediocrity. "Poltergeist II" doesn't have a ghost of a chance. When sequels are numbered with Arabic instead of Roman numerals, like "Police Academy 3," it's a sign of extreme cheapness. "Police Academy" never deserved to be made in the first place so why have there been three of them?

Before long we'll be exposed to other great sequels like "Karate Kid II" and "Aliens" (notice the "s").

• Gore Flicks — Each summer there is a rash of movies about kids being killed by monsters, aliens, psychopaths and other mean, nasty things. This sum-

mer is no exception. We have "Aliens" about people being slaughtered by extraterrestrials and "Invaders from Mars," also about people being slaughtered by extraterrestrials. We have "Demons" and "Poltergeist II" about people being slaughtered by monsters. Before long there's bound to be a few slasher movies, like "Nightmare on Elm Street 3" and "Friday the 13th Part 4.5731 x 10²⁴."

Head Horror Hack Stephen King will have another movie out this summer. King's fans, and even King himself, have been disappointed by the quality of the movies made from his work. The good news about "Maximum Overdrive" is that King himself is directing so that no outside influences will screw up his story. The bad news is that it stars a group of cars and trucks that kill people to the "music" of AC/DC.

• Kiddie Movies — Since the kids are out of school for the summer, Hollywood does their best to get the kids into the theater. Although all of the movies out today are aimed for those with the mentality of a 13-year-old, there are some made for teen-agers in particular. We have the above-mentioned gore flicks and sequels plus "Ferris Bueller's Day Off," "Space Camp" and "The Manhattan Project." I was in high school once, and I don't remember having that much sex, drugs and rock 'n' roll at my disposal.

For the more mature kids we have "My Little Pony — the Movie" and Walt Disney's "The Great Mouse Detective."

• Long Commercials — For some reason Hollywood wants to help sell the Air Force and the space program to American youth, so they have made two long commercials. "Space Camp" has a group of kids trapped aboard the space shuttle during an accidental launch. Considering the NASA's recent problems, they need all the help they can get.

"Top Gun," a movie about the glamorous life of an Air Force pilot, should have recruiting officers in the lobby instead of popcorn salesmen.

• Stallone/Schwarzenegger — Each summer moviegoers are exposed to a disease more frightful than a mumps epidemic in a giraffe herd. Each summer two big guys with lots of muscles and guns decide to release two hours of film showing them shooting, chopping, hacking, whacking, slashing, bashing, crushing, cracking, crunching and breaking members of the Screen Actors Guild who don't have anything better to do. I can deal with the violence in these movies. But when Sly Stallone and Arnold Schwarzenegger start talking, my stomach churns and I have to run from the theater. How two illiterate slob make so much money is beyond me. Since Schwarzenegger is from Austria he has an excuse for his mumbblings. Stallone must have been hit in the head too many times while making the "Rocky" movies.

For those of you who haven't heard of these movies, "Cobra" has Stallone killing people, while "Raw Deal" has Schwarzenegger killing people. It is rumored that next summer Stallone and Schwarzenegger plan to expand their acting abilities by making a movie together. "Cobra 2 — Raw Deal 0" should be in the theaters sometime next May.

There is one good thing about this summer's movies: they may cause some people to start reading again.

Karl Palmeyer is a senior journalism major and a columnist for The Battalion.

Revamped Superman threat to self-esteem

When I was a kid, about six or seven, I flew across the room. I stood on the end of my parent's bed (the one with posters that I later broke and blamed on the cleaning lady), extended my bathrobe behind me and pushed off. I sailed through the air, cleared part of the room and came to a remarkably soft landing by skidding to a stop under my father's chest of drawers. "Like Superman!" my sister exclaimed. That, I informed her, was the whole idea.



Richard Cohen

That was the only flight for which there were witnesses. Like the times I was both the cowboy and his horse (I could run at a gallop), my career as Superman went largely unnoticed by the world around me. No one knew that I could fly (faster than a speeding bullet), or that my strength was superhuman, or that once I stood perched on the porch roof and considered duplicating my bedroom feat until, seized by panic, I prudently transformed myself into Clark Kent and took the stairs instead.

I tell you these true tales (one of them, remember, witnessed) because word has reached these precincts that Superman, the one of the comic books, is going to be changed.

After 48 years, the people at DC Comics say they are going to make the Man of Steel "more vulnerable." He will retain his super powers, but they won't be, well, so super. As for Clark Kent, always a contradiction in terms (there is no such thing as a mild-mannered reporter), he will become more assertive and "upwardly mobile" — in fact, either a columnist or a feature writer. (Maybe he'll appear on "The McLaughlin Group" and send Robert Novak to the moon.)

"It's very important for him to be accepted as a human being, to be accepted as he really is," said John Byrne, the writer and artist for the new Superman. "He (Kent) doesn't have to be the outrageous wimp he's been in the past. He is going to be more self-assured as Clark."

As an upwardly mobile and assertive columnist myself, I would like to tell this Byrne character something: Eat Kryptonite! Go play around with Archie and Jughead. Do what you want with Plasticman or that rich snob, Batman; make Spider-man into Butterfly Man and convert Scrooge McDuck into an investment banker who got rich on inside trading, but keep your pen off Superman. (Where's Lex Luther when you need him?)

DC Comics, attempting to keep what a professor of popular culture (that's a different column) called its "market position," thinks it is doing the smart thing by turning the boy from Smallville into Quicheman. (Look in the sky: It's a bird! It's a plane! It's a fern!) But they are making a serious mistake. The attraction of Superman was that he personified that bundle of inadequacies and insecurities that we call "a boy."

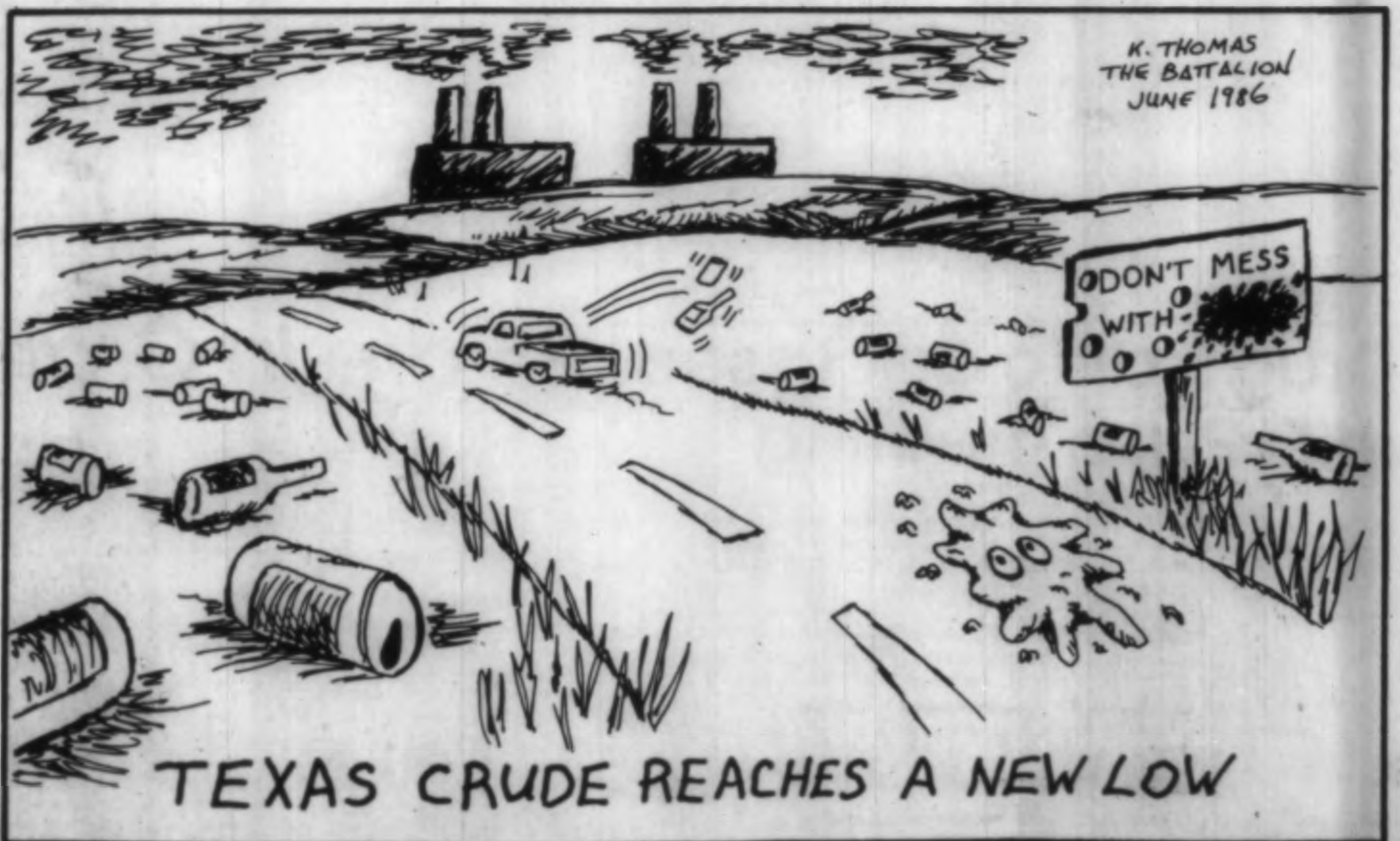
A kid could look at the nonassertive, meek and desperately-in-need-of-therapy Kent and see that he was also Superman. Kent was the boy, the reader, and Superman was who the boy could someday be — the promise, the future. Kent was lost in the world, overwhelmed by its demands, awkward and often adrift in a sea of dreams. Boys are that way. They can look at Kent and identify. He is who they are and Superman is who they can become. Superman needs only a phone booth and a change of clothes. A boy needs only some years.

We have yet to see the new, more assertive Kent. But he is bound to be a mistake. Like countless heroes of countless movies, Kent is the guy who does not wear his machoism on his sleeve. He does not fight, even when provoked, although of course he could. He knows that true manliness has nothing to do with aggression or belligerence but, instead, with the way you conduct yourself — that and an adherence to principles. In the movies, the principle might be nonviolence (the fighter who killed an opponent in the ring) or some silly pledge you have made to a woman (Gary Cooper to Grace Kelly in "High Noon"). For Superman it is the concealment of his true identity. In any case, the message is a worthy one: Being a man takes discipline and self-control.

Now, alas, all of that will be gone and the outcome is certain. Superman will hang around single bars, ask women their signs, jog (like from Metropolis to Tokyo), tell shrinks that even though, fer shoor, he's super, he's not really happy — and boys perched on beds everywhere will think that the future will be like the present. Maybe in the next movie Superman will be played by Woody Allen.

Up, up and oye yey!

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