

Opinion

New findings liberate coffee drinkers' consciences

College has robbed me of many earthly pleasures. Most of my hobbies have been abandoned. I no longer have the time to paint or read real books.

Except for a weekly racquetball rivalry with *The Battalion* sports editor Ken Sury and a rare few minutes with my out-of-tune and dusty guitar, I don't get much chance to enjoy the finer aspects of leisure.

But college did introduce me to one worldly delight — coffee. This stimulating black liquid is a college student's ambrosia.

I turned to coffee out of desperate need, but I have grown to love it. Many late nights I would stay up, mug in hand, reading textbooks that were a sure-fire cure for insomnia. Concentration seemed a little easier with my "caffeinated" companion.

My infatuation with coffee grew slowly. It probably started before birth. Before he cut down, my father was a 12-to 15-cup-a-day man.

But for years I avoided the stuff like the Black Death. Once, just to be daring, my friend and I made some when his parents were out of town. Being an adult, we decided, tasted terrible.

College, however, meant the need to function in several jobs, study and not sleep for long periods of time. Coffee was the only answer.

At first I drank only enough to serve these medicinal purposes, pouring in as much sugar and cream as I could stand without gagging.

But college students are not known for well-stocked larders, and I was no exception. When the sugar ran out, I learned to drink my coffee with just cream. Then, the night before finals, the



Loren Steffy

cream ran out. With a gulp and a wince, I started down the black road to true coffee appreciation.

I mercilessly consumed the liquid — two cups in the morning, two cups at night, as many as I could get at the restaurant where I worked.

When I got my own desk at *The Battalion*, I brought my own pot. It sits in the corner, perking diligently away, filling the newsroom with its sweet aroma and annoying my fellow workers, who, for future journalists, are lacking severely in coffee addiction.

Then, disaster struck. I learned that a team of Harvard scientists discovered a link between coffee and cancer of the pancreas. I was faced with a horrible dilemma. Did I dare to dance with death and continue to consume this liquid ecstasy, or should I part with my beloved beverage in the name of a healthy pancreas — one of my favorite bodily organs?

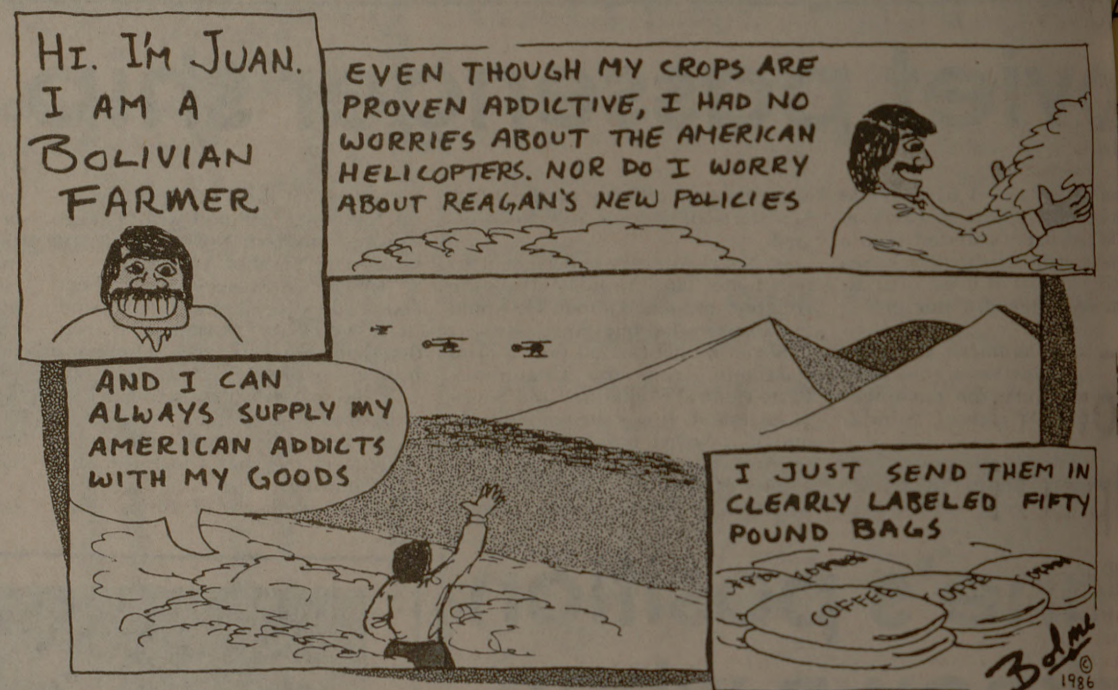
Being of true journalistic stock, my body genetically calibrated to deal with potentially harmful substances such as Twinkies, pizza and Moon Pies (it is rumored that these delicacies have so many preservatives they will not only kill you, but save on embalming costs as well), I decided to flirt with fate and keep on perking.

Now the Harvard scientists wisely have reversed their previous decision. The study always was controversial, and its methods often refuted by other groups, the members' hands shaking from caffeine withdrawal.

As long as coffee consumption is kept to less than five cups a day, there is no increased risk of cancer. More than five, it's unclear, but men who exceeded this limit had nearly 2½ times the risk of pancreatic cancer.

It's a sacrifice, but I think I can trim down to five cups.

The consciences of coffee drinkers everywhere have been liberated. We are free to sip, slurp or



guzzle up to five cups a day and still die with a healthy pancreas.

Personal interests aside, I'm glad the group from Harvard re-evaluated its study. Obvious bias exists. Harvard, it's image far too "distinguished" to submit to coffee-drinking, is a school of tea-loyalists. It is, after all, located near Boston, a town known for its tea parties.

So why did the Harvard researchers change their mind?

I've only visited Harvard briefly, so I'm speculating about what goes on behind those ivy-laden walls, but I imagine the scientists reached their new decision the same way most professionals do. They sat down and talked about it over a cup of coffee.

Loren Steffy is a senior journalism major and the Opinion Page editor for *The Battalion*.

Apartheid means even basic pleasures can be denied

In Johannesburg one day, writing frantically in my hotel room, I called for room service, which is how I met Harry, the waiter. Harry, a runner, noticed my running shoes, and I suggested we go for a run later in the nearby park. Harry's face dropped. Blacks, he said, were forbidden to use the park.



Richard Cohen

By South African standards, segregated parks are a minor nuisance. After all, we are talking about a country where blacks cannot vote, where government policy separates families and where blacks are forbidden by law to live in white areas. I was told later that the parks had been desegregated. Clearly, though, custom or ignorance of the law kept Harry in his place.

You had to have seen the look on Harry's face to appreciate apartheid — his sad acceptance of the situation and also the infuriating rage at the injustice of it. Harry was condemned to second-class citizenship by birth. The freedom of the runner, the ability to go where your legs will take you, even that was denied him.

Some members of the U.S. Senate, Malcolm Wallop in particular, seem not to understand that. During the Senate debate over economic sanctions, the Wyoming Republican characterized the demand for them as an appeal to "domestic racial politics. What we're looking at is middle-class, comfortable white senators playing up to the black

population of America, the liberal population."

Of course, Wallop has a point. But surely this Senate veteran has not discovered now that politicians occasionally pander to their constituencies. Does he think the Senate's decision to subsidize grain sales to the Soviet Union had nothing to do with the plight of farmers in an election year? Does he think that the U. S. preoccupation with the plight of Soviet Jewry — as opposed to, say, the plight of the Turkish minority in Bulgaria — is unrelated to the political influence of American Jews?

It would be one thing if the demand for sanctions reflected trivial or illegitimate concerns, but they do not. They are brought home to us precisely because there is an American constituency that feels them acutely — whose families have suffered in similar ways. Why American blacks should be any different is beyond me. Naturally, they identify with the plight of South Africa's blacks. It was not that long ago, after all, that American blacks were banned from public parks. Racial, ethnic, religious affinity is not something new, something unique to blacks or to any group of American voters.

To Wallop and some other conservatives, it remains a mystery that American blacks and their liberal allies feel so strongly about South Africa, proposing punitive sanctions, for instance, while feeling only indifference or repugnance toward the Soviet Union. After all, that's a country with a really reprehensible human rights record. There is a country whose history contains a bloody Gulag stretching beyond the borders of the imagination. Why South Africa and not the Soviet Union?

In the preface to his classic memoir, "Survival In Auschwitz," the Italian writer, Primo Levi, suggests an answer: "Many people, many nations . . . find themselves holding . . . that every stranger is the enemy." Levi is referring to anti-Semitism, but it applies as well to the racism of South Africa, where by virtue of birth, a black remains always "the stranger," always "the enemy." Even in the Soviet Union, conformity to the political system assures a normal life. Most people can choose and even those who choose "wrong" can later be "re-educated" and resume a measure of an ordinary life.

Racism is different. You cannot be re-educated out of your skin. Prison, even torture, can not change your genetic pool by which you are prejudged. This is why Nazi doctrine held that Jews had to be killed — that their crime was not what they did, but who they were. Even religious conversion could not alter the gene pool.

That is the sort of racism at the core of the apartheid system. Of course, apartheid has its ethnic and economic components — cheap labor, for instance. But its essential racism cannot be overlooked.

We are all many things and when I was in South Africa, one of the things I was a runner. I delighted in the independence of it, the ability to discover a strange city all on my own. I knew that Harry would have liked to share that joy. I knew, too, the cruelty of apartheid, but I knew it better because of a small thing: A man like me said he could not go where his legs could take him.

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Mail Call

Life savings lost

EDITOR:

I was riding in the rain from Reed McDonald to the Pavilion to pay my fees. Unfortunately, I lost an envelope containing my life's savings of around \$1,600. If any Aggie finds it, please contact Tuan Tran at 846-8127. Please help out an Aggie. This money is for my four years education at Aggieland.

Tuan Tran

Slow down, you move too fast

EDITOR:

On behalf of everyone in town, I'd like to welcome back all the students (particularly the driver of the "Howdy Dammit" pickup that careened past me on Harvey Road) and make an observation: Life as you know it probably won't change much if you arrive at your destination five minutes late.

It could change pretty radically if, in your haste, you wreck your vehicle and break your spine — or mine, as I (or my survivors) will not hesitate to sue your mom and dad for every penny they have or ever hope to have. So slow down and have a good semester.

M.L. Creamer

Glad to be here

EDITOR:

A few weeks back I was a graduate student. I stalked the corridors of academe with crumpled backpack and disheveled look, waiting for it all to come to an end. I looked up to my professors. They seemed to exist on a hallowed plane well removed from my mundane existence. Separating us was a gulf of recognition, and it appeared entirely improbable that I, a mere creature, could bridge it. All of a sudden I found myself on the other side, but I am still the same mundane self. Naturally, I am not sure I deserved it.

I feel good. Like a caterpillar becoming a butterfly, this is something that was always expected of me yet entirely beyond my comprehension. Sometimes when meeting people outside the University environment I feel a bit awkward telling them that I am an assistant professor. I carry the backpack and go everywhere on bicycle, so when I say that I teach, people often think of me as a graduate student. I usually let that pass, feeling unprepared for the awe that being a faculty elicits.

The best thing I like about Texas A&M is the intense Aggie spirit. I enjoy finding out about the history of A&M. I appreciate traditions; they reflect intense pride and an awareness of history which is unique to Texas.

I was told to expect radical conservatism in Texas, along with some prejudice. As a visitor to this country, I must say that I have personally faced little prejudice from the average American, and I certainly didn't expect it in a university community. I am glad to say that my experience so far has borne this out, although I keep on hearing reports to the contrary.

On the whole, I am glad I made the decision to come to Texas. The budget problems don't bother me much — whatever the level of cuts, the state funding for this University will remain much higher than the private university I came from. I am of course, concerned with possible manpower and salary cuts, but for the time being I am content to leave that battle to the powers-that-be.

Another reason why I feel good about this job is because of my parents. I know I have made them very happy (tinged with a little sadness since I am so far away). My father, who always wanted to be a professor, is immensely proud of me. The mind, he says, is man's greatest wealth, and I have been honored to be chosen as a caretaker. Every time we talk he enjoins me to live up to the high expectations of this position, as if he doesn't really expect me to.

For his sake and for the sake of all you Aggies out there, I know I can — and I will.

Amit Mukeyee
Computer Science

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