

Opinion

The Battalion

(USPS 045 360)

Member of
Texas Press Association
Southwest Journalism Conference

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Teachers, practice what you teach

The tempest of idiocy that has surrounded the Texas Examination of Current Administrators and Teachers rages on. Copies of the competency exam reportedly were sold to teachers who still haven't passed the test. Such cheating adds a new twist to the serpentine course of Texas' educational cleanup and raises questions about teachers' ethics.

The Tyler Morning Telegraph reported Wednesday that copies of the test booklets were being sold for as much as \$5 per page. The story also said a number of booklets had been obtained by several East Texas teachers for the exams given in March and June.

The Texas Education Agency has admitted some of the booklets from the March test may be missing. TEA naively assumed all the booklets would be turned back in with the answer sheets.

Obviously, TEA has a more noble view of teacher honesty than the teachers themselves. If a student pulled such a deceitful stunt in the classroom, the instructor would be rightfully outraged and the student justly punished.

That teachers have stooped to such depths makes their actions all the more despicable.

Even the TECAT deserves more respect than this. Although the exam is a miserable excuse for education reform, it is a decent monitor of basic skills — not teaching skills so much as basic literacy skills and fundamental mathematical abilities.

Those who failed the tests do not belong in the classroom. A basic knowledge of reading, writing and arithmetic, not to mention scruples, is not too stringent a requirement for being a teacher.

Those who cheat to pass only prove TECAT's point — they are unfit to be teachers, not only academically but also morally.

Forest for the trees

The flourishing national forests in Texas are proof that with determination, hard work and long-range planning, programs that benefit future generations can grow up even during tough economic times.

Davy Crockett National Forest, the first national forest established in Texas, is 50 years old today.

Texas' national forests were established in the mid-'30s as part of President Franklin D. Roosevelt's program to put America back to work.

FDR's newly created Civilian Conservation Corps helped turn East Texas land, devastated by abuse, neglect and poor management by lumber companies, into thriving woodland.

The CCC planted new trees and built recreational areas. The results of its labor are enjoyed by many Texans today. Wildlife and watersheds are protected and tree harvesting and reseeded is carefully planned.

The state once again faces a grim economic outlook, but our national forests stand as a vital reminder of what planning for tomorrow and not just today can do for Texas.



Car dealer red tape exceeds worst bureaucratic nightmares

I bought a pickup this weekend. Well, I actually didn't buy it, but a \$1,000 down-payment, courtesy of my parents, is in the hands of that super-colossus motor vehicle company whose name happens to have four letters — yes, it's the "F" word.



Craig Renfro

So much for my choice of dealers. Actually they are all about the same — overpriced.

But that didn't matter because time was running short on the much-talked-about, lowest-in-years, supergrand automotive deal of all time — 2.9 percent annual financing.

Actually, it was my parent's decision that I take advantage of the situation, and with their financial backing how could I refuse? I was planning to get a new truck in December, after graduation, but the thought of saving nearly \$2,000 on finance charges proved to be too much for me. I never said I was a strong person when it comes to money.

I was excited at the thought of having a new vehicle, but I didn't care for the process involved in purchasing one. First of all, the dealers make you feel like they are doing you a favor by selling you this "fine automobile." My parents and I went to four dealerships during a whirlwind tour of Central Texas showrooms, and at each one of them the salesman acted like he didn't care if I bought one or not.

"Well, there are only two left, you bet-

ter get it while you can, because if you don't someone else will."

I didn't care for their attitude but I figured I wouldn't have to deal with them for long. Was I ever wrong. The process began at noon Monday. It was cold and rainy, not exactly what you would call the perfect car-shopping day.

I'd finally decided on the truck I wanted, which was pretty easy to do since there were only two to choose from. I took it for a test-drive to see how it handled. In the mile and a half I drove it nothing broke. I decided this was the one for me.

Next began the part I didn't want to do — paperwork. I thought Texas A&M and the federal government were bad, but this exceeded all of my bureaucratic nightmares. They wanted to know everything about me and my money history. Unfortunately, my credit history is limited. I have never purchased a new car, a house, real estate or taken out any type of loan from a commercial lender. So that meant I must have a co-signer for the loan. Fortunately, my parents were there to put their John Hancock on the dotted line.

Then began the credit check. And that marked the beginning of many "unfortunate circumstances" that took place before I finally drove off the lot.

It was nearly 1:30 p.m. by the time we finished with the paperwork, and we were hungry. The salesman assured us that when we got back from lunch everything would be ready to roll. I really didn't believe him, but as long as it was ready by evening that would be fine.

It wasn't ready when we got back from lunch, so we began the wait. I'm not a patient person when it comes to

waiting, but I figured it wouldn't be bad. At least I wasn't standing in a line. We waited and waited, but to no avail.

As 4 p.m. approached, progress didn't look good for an evening delivery. Twenty minutes later the sales manager told us that the computer system Austin had crashed earlier in the afternoon. This upset me almost to the point of doing something I would probably regret later.

Why couldn't she have told us earlier instead of having us sit around all afternoon? They didn't even offer us a cup of coffee, but I played host in the coffee room and made some. There's nothing left to do but come back the next day.

The computer system would be operating at 9 a.m. and by lunch everything should be signed, sealed and delivered. We arrived at the dealer by 11 a.m. and, of course, it wasn't ready. So we went shopping and to lunch before coming back at 2 p.m. The truck wasn't ready. I was really becoming a patient and wanted to smash things. I maintained my cool.

Finally, at 3:30 p.m., I was relieved of my anguish. The deal had been approved. It was a time of general agreement for me, complete with balloons and dancing girls (just kidding!).

It took about another hour before we actually drove off the lot because the tendants had to clean up my vehicle to make it smell nice. I insisted that washing it wouldn't be necessary because it was raining. They said they knew that but they had to do it anyway. Someday I believed them.

Craig Renfro is a senior journalism major and a columnist for The Battalion.

Confessions of a coasterphobic

I'm sorry, but not for one minute am I buying all this weeping, whining and gnashing of teeth about the State Fair roller coaster being stilled for this sesquicentennial spin.

John Anders
Guest Columnist

Sure, we wanted the old, white, wooden wonder to be there whenever we needed it, but who in their right mind would want to ride it, anyway? I mean, have any of you actually ridden on the old cruiser? Really? Didn't you just hate it?

The best thing about the old Comet coaster, stilled this year for insurance purposes, is that the line was always so long it gave you a decent out for not buying a ticket. One of the awful things about growing up in Dallas and hitting the fair like clockwork every year was that sooner or later you'd wind up on the roller coaster despite every excuse or alibi you could muster.

I remember with shame the derisive laughter I suffered the year I bowed to a siege of post-nasal drip. I don't think anybody bought my story.

The next year I went on crutches after a football injury against the mighty Rusk Rams, who pounded us like a drum, 37-7, in the Cotton Bowl. I got

carried off the field to the cheers of the Hill Highlanders drill team, the only time they ever had cause to celebrate anything I accomplished on a football field. I loved being on crutches — it gave me honorable discharge from every nasty ride on the midway that year.

The roller-coaster ritual was obscene; to demonstrate your macho, you were supposed to throw caution to the wind and ride with your hands held high over your head, stick-'em-up style. I hated that. The guy in the front car always made a big spectacle of doing that, looking around at the rest of us to make sure we were following suit. I wanted to yell, "Down in front!"

The happiest day of my life occurred when I was a college freshman visiting the fair, and, for once, nobody dared me to go on the roller coaster. The idea, I suppose, is that we were too grown-up for that sort of nonsense. The rapture. The bliss. Those brief years between being a newly formed adult and then becoming a kid-at-heart-who-thinks-riding-the-coaster-will-be-a-hoot were some of the happiest days of my life.

I hate to have to do the things I've outgrown just because suddenly it's somebody's idea of a hoot. If you don't get to be a grown-up when you want, you can always pout and hold your breath until you turn blue.

I'll tell you how much I hate that white whale, or any other coasters of its ilk, for that matter. I hate them so much I even refused one year to accompany my kid on the kiddie roller coaster at the midway. I'm talking a silly, innocuous little ride with all the breakneck velocity and excitement of a teeter-totter.

My son was in elementary school and naturally assumed that his big, hairy-chested daddy would show him the ropes. Instead, I balked completely at riding the kiddie roller coaster. He wanted to know why, of course, and for the first time in my life, I heard myself telling the truth. No stories of post-nasal drip or ceremonial crutches.

I looked Kirk in the eye and gave him the lowdown straight from the shoulder: "Son, your old man is a sissy. I'm scared to go on that ride. I think it's good that we get this settled right now before you get into those 'my daddy can lick your daddy' games with the other kids."

When you think of it, that's a pretty amazing admission of wimphood for a father to lay on his young son. Somehow I felt a load lifted off my shoulders. My son has since learned to fight his own battles, knowing Dad is always there right behind him — win or tie.

John Anders is a columnist for The Dallas Morning News.

Mail Call

What was the objective?

EDITOR:

I question both the motives and the intelligence underlying the actions of Andy Vann, Jeff Newberry, David Kohel and assorted others at midnight of practice on Oct. 3.

According to the Battalion article on Wednesday, Vann wished to gauge the Corps' reaction to a violation of tradition. Newberry intended to obtain a crowd reaction by the violence which (in his own words) he knew would result. Kohel disliked the limiting aspects of tradition and desired greater spontaneity of action. The motivation of the remaining 12 individuals was doubtless similar.

Setting aside the relative merits of tradition for the moment, valid and practical reasons exist for not allowing people to run wild on Kyle Field during yell practice. Such behavior interferes with the management of a University function and detracts from the enjoyment of the audience. Furthermore, it poses safety problems for those individuals on the field as well as for those attempting to cross it.

Why was it necessary to create an incident in the first place? The students who ran onto the field deliberately set out to provoke the cadets, placing themselves in the wrong by ignoring not only tradition but also common sense.

The cadets who responded to the provocation probably will be reprimanded and instructed to tone down their behavior. Who will reprimand the civilians? Perhaps the sole positive result of this will be that future violators will be removed from the field more gently. Was that their objective? Or did they just need attention?

Alex Mabry '89
Accompanied by 12 signatures

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