

Opinion

Despite painful memories mowing now not bad

I mowed the lawn the other day. It was the first time in about four years that I got behind a mower and pushed it through grass the size of overgrown munchkins. The funny thing is that I really had a good time.



Karl Pallmeyer

When I was growing up in Matador, I used to want to help my brother with the mowing. My brother never appreciated my help, usually because it would take twice as long to get the job done. I wanted to play with the dogs in the freshly cut grass and kept getting in the way. He sometimes would let me push the mower with him, but when I got a little older I discovered how heavy that machine was without my brother's touch. When I was old enough, I was stuck with the mowing all by myself.

The yard at our home in Matador was HUGE. It usually took three full days to complete the task. The fact that the mower broke down every 10 minutes didn't help. I would have to get my brother to fix the mower so that I could complete my duties.

Despite prayers to the great Briggs and Stratton god, my brother always managed to get the damn thing running again. I always was grateful for the slight reprieve from mowing that the mechanical breakdown provided, but I never enjoyed my brother's remarks concerning my obvious lack of manhood because I couldn't put a carburetor back together.

Some kids, namely my brother, are born with great mechanical ability, but I was not. Older brothers rarely are sympathetic when it comes to a younger brother's inability to get a motor started.

When we moved to Meridian, the yard wasn't much better. Unfortunately the yard at our Meridian home was just as big as the other one, and even worse, this yard had trees. It's bad enough when you have to mow in a straight line but when you have to work around trees you spend twice as much time on the job.

While Matador was in the Panhandle and rarely got rain during the summer months, Meridian usually received lots of rain. I always seemed to finish the front yard before a week-long rain storm hit. By the time things dried up enough to continue mowing and finish the back yard, the front needed cutting again. I felt like I had been condemned to Dante's "Inferno" and my punishment was to mow for eternity.

When we moved to Meridian, the old Briggs and Stratton, along with all of its problems went with us. By this time my brother had grown up and moved away so I had to find someone else to fix the mower. That someone else was my dad.

It was awful. I would try in vain for hours to get the mower started, but it would never work. My dad would give the cord one pull and the mower would purr to life, eager to destroy any grass that lay in its path. After a couple of hours of mowing, the machine would sputter and die. Once again I pull and pull and pull to no avail. My dad would come out, give the cord a single pull and once again the mower jumped into action. I am convinced that a special fea-



ture on the Briggs and Stratton is the "Father Switch."

The "Father Switch" will keep the mower from starting if it's in the "off" position. Only fathers know the location of the "Father Switch" so that sons will be forced to ask their dads for help and dads have something that makes them feel superior to their sons. The Briggs and Stratton secret instruction book must have a whole chapter on the "Father Switch" that includes sly remarks to make to your son once you start the mower he has been fighting for the past 10 years of his life.

On more occasions than I would care to remember, the mower's problems could not be solved by the "Father Switch." Sometimes the mower had to be taken apart, and that led to a wonderful father-son get together over parts and tools and grease and sweat.

After a few dozen frustrated hours of mower repair, my father began to suspect that I had sabotaged the mower in an attempt to free myself from my duties. Little did he realize that I would gladly mow a dozen lawns, trees and all, than incur his wrath.

When I moved off to college I finally was deprived of the mowing sentence I had received when I got old enough to take over for my brother. The main reason I have gone to summer school for four years is so I wouldn't be home long enough to have to struggle with the old Briggs and Stratton. (Ironically, the old Briggs and Stratton became the new Briggs and Stratton when my dad began to start mowing.)

I spent my college career living in dorms and apartments without yards — until I found a house to rent. Now I have a yard, even though it is a small one.

At the first of the summer, when my roommates and I moved into the house, we tried to split up all of the tasks equally. Needless to say I didn't volunteer for the mowing privileges. Until the other day. The lawn had grown to the point

where the neighbor kids began to appear and small bones were in the driveway. My roommates were busy with work and school, and I had an afternoon with a little free time. I got up the mower, a Briggs and Stratton supplied by our landlord, and started it. The mower started on the first pull and didn't stop until I was finished.

After about an hour I was sweating, grass and bugs. As I stepped back and looked over the yard, I had a feeling of accomplishment, but it was a strange, but I actually enjoyed it.

I hope my dad doesn't get the wrong idea.

Karl Pallmeyer is a senior major and a columnist for The Battalion.

Mail Call

New prescription for South Africa

EDITOR:

The American people are such hypocrites. At home, we declare that morality cannot be legislated. We resent those whom we perceive to impose their morality on us. Yet in our foreign policy, we commission ourselves to be crusaders commissioned to impose our morality on nations who do not behave as we do.

Our government was founded to secure the blessings of liberty ourselves and our posterity. We elect and pay public officials to promote the general welfare of our country, not to chasten other sovereign nations for their supposed misdeeds. Governing our country is a full-time job and it cannot be done properly if we are distracted with moralizing against foreigners.

We deceive ourselves if we think we can force other nations to do the right thing. We may have temporary, superficial success, but lasting change is possible only when the erring nations themselves choose to change their ways. Though you may be able to compel me as an individual, you cannot compel your moral standard, unless I choose your standard myself. I will not rebel against your imposed will.

Do we truly desire to see South Africa healed of the disease that afflicts it? We treat the sick with care, giving them foods to nourish their bodies, drugs to attack their sickness. South Africa has an ideological disease that body politic must be nourished with right ideas, and the diseased ideas infecting it must be refuted and driven out. Promoting truth by example will do much to effect this cure. Force, however, applied through economic sanctions or military intervention, is the prescription for the healing of South Africa.

Brian Arthur Frederick '87

Meaning behind the words

EDITOR:

Let us consider for a moment the underlying philosophical meaning behind the phrase "Highway 6 runs both ways." Being a non-Texasian, I do not understand the true concept that the statement espouses, but I mean, rather than try to change things at Texas A&M, even if for the sake of leaving if you don't like them.

Coming from a large (liberal) midwestern university, whose very motto lies in the cultivation of original thought, this attitude strikes me as the best, and at worst, self-destructive. Those few who are truly concerned with the continued intellectual growth of this institution must accept as a basic principle the idea that constructive criticism can only benefit. If we allow this to become so incestuous by the vocal few who promote this absurd notion, it is governed by one mindless, self-propagating force, then we all suffer in our struggle for its betterment.

Conflicting ideas and the ability (and right) to state them are the elements on which the foundation of this nation rests. My message to those who adhere to this position is to think about what is truly the best approach to take to heighten the stature of this University. If the conclusion is that the quo is the ultimate that it can achieve, then Highway 6 actually runs only one direction — down.

Alan D. Propp

'Good Ags' from 'bad Ags'

EDITOR:

I had a friend drive down for the Baylor game who had heard of our extraordinary football games, yell practices and, above all, the environment here at A&M, which is not offered at many schools. When we returned to his car the windshield was shattered. I was quite shocked, but not nearly so much as I was disappointed. I could do nothing but apologize for the behavior of a few bad Ags. This is not the first incident this football season. Are we going to have to provide a parking lot with babysitters to protect visitors' vehicles from destruction?

The presence of a few out-numbered spectators at our yell practices encourages the Aggie crowd to cheer on its fighting team and to support the unity of the school. Is our pride being threatened to cause traditions fade till they disappear? Are we going to become a campus? God forbid. Let's leave this for the UT students, they'll do it fine.

Mercedes Salinas '89

Who turns out the lights?

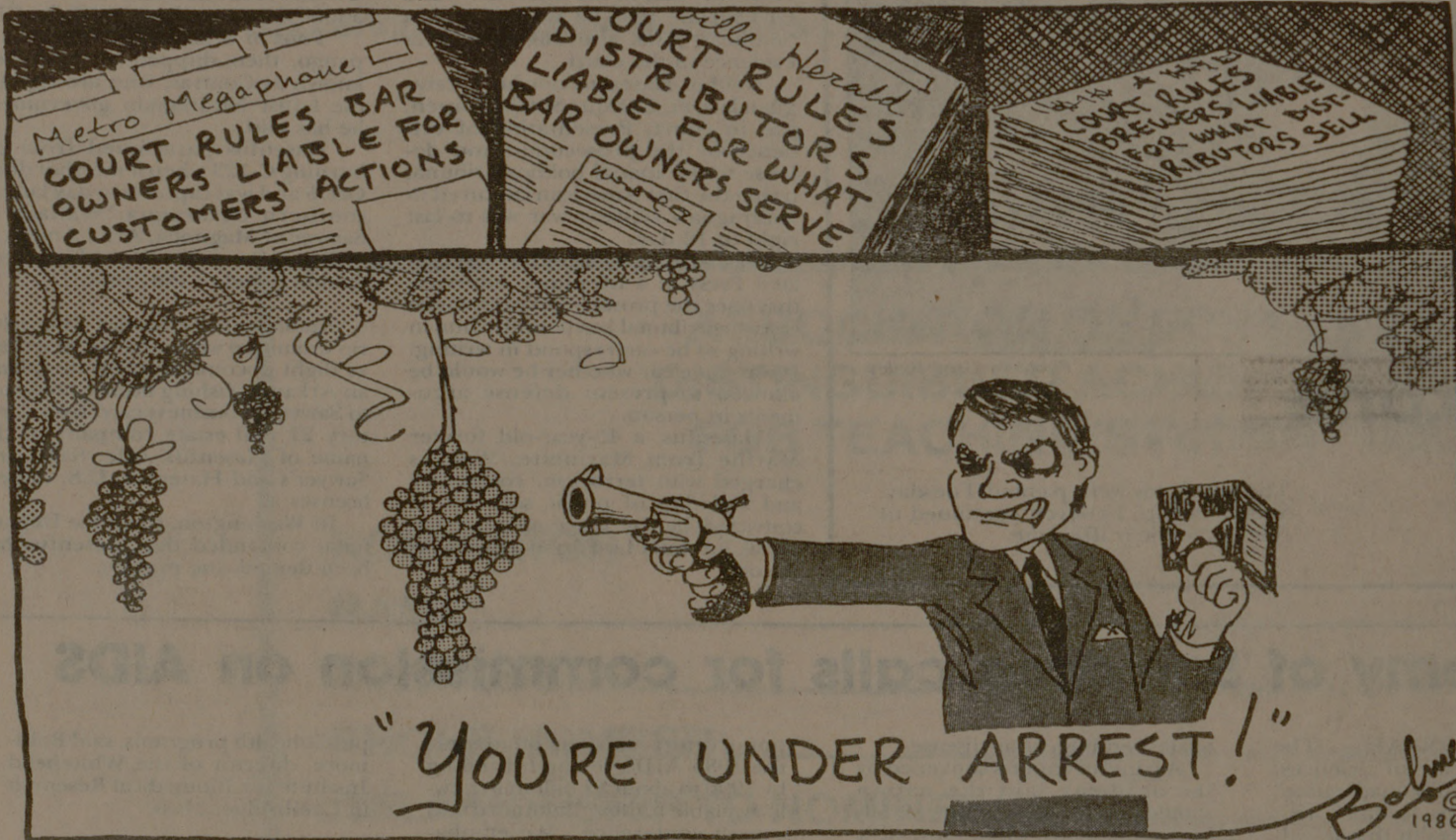
EDITOR:

I want to express my sincere appreciation to the person in charge of the lights overlooking Kyle Field. They single-handedly make what well may be the most popular tradition at the world's greatest university!

For those of us who are fortunate enough to be hand-picked as a lady of our choice, those in charge of the lights make midnight mowing a truly enjoyable experience.

I doubt that the light operators are given the credit or the respect they deserve, so on behalf of the A&M student body, thank you for THE GOOD WORK!

Ray McMillan '87



Bob Kane 1986

A movie without popcorn like a teen-ager without zits

NEW YORK — This is incredible. Here I am in the entertainment capital of the world, and I go into a movie theater on Broadway, the entertainment street of the world, and I can't buy popcorn.



Lewis Grizzard

There was popcorn in the movie theater. There just was nobody behind the counter to sell it.

"I would like to speak to the manager," I said to the man who had taken my ticket. "There's nobody to sell the popcorn."

"The manager's not here," said the man, "but I can tell you why there's nobody to sell the popcorn. The popcorn girl didn't show up for work."

"What's the problem with her?" I

asked. "She has a new zit?" (Ever notice that all kids who work for movie theaters have terrible acne?)

"No," the ticket-taker replied, "her boyfriend, Julio, lost his earring in a gangfight and she's helping him look for it."

"Why don't you sell me some popcorn?" I asked.

"No way," he answered. "The union won't let me."

I'm dying for a bag of popcorn and I have to run into Samuel Gompers.

The reason I go to movies in the first place is for the popcorn. A movie without popcorn is like a punkhead without an earring.

I always buy the largest container of popcorn available, so if the movie is long and boring, like Amadeus, I still have a good time eating all that popcorn.

I'm also stingy with my popcorn. If I take a date to the movie, I always ask her

politely, "Will you have some popcorn?"

Most women answer that by saying, "No, I'll just have some of yours."

I never fall for that. Nobody can eat just a little popcorn, so when a woman doesn't have her own she starts eating yours, and pretty soon, it's all gone.

I say, "Listen, you can have as much or as little popcorn as you want, but you must carry it to your seat in your own personal container. Try to get some of mine, and you'll draw back a nub."

I rarely have a second date with a woman I take to a movie, but a man must have his priorities in order.

The movie I saw sans popcorn was Rob Reiner's "Stand by Me."

It's about four 12-year-olds who go looking for a dead body and nearly get eaten by a junkyard dog, run over by a train, drained dry of their blood by leeches and sliced by bullies' switchblades. It's a comedy.

But that's about all I remember. I was too busy thinking about popcorn to pay much attention to the movie.

As I was leaving the theater, the popcorn girl finally was showing up for work with Julio and his relocated earring in tow.

"You're both a disgrace to the good name of Orville Redenbacher," I said, wishing on both the dreaded curse of large, red zits on the ends of their noses. Harsh perhaps, but popcorn is my life.

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The Battalion

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