

Opinion

The Battalion

(USPS 045 360)

Member of
Texas Press Association
Southwest Journalism Conference

The Battalion Editorial Board

Cathie Anderson, Editor
Kirsten Dietz, Managing Editor
Loren Steffy, Opinion Page Editor
Frank Smith, City Editor
Sue Krenek, News Editor
Ken Sury, Sports Editor

Editorial Policy

The Battalion is a non-profit, self-supporting newspaper operated as a community service to Texas A&M and Bryan-College Station.

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 Journalism.

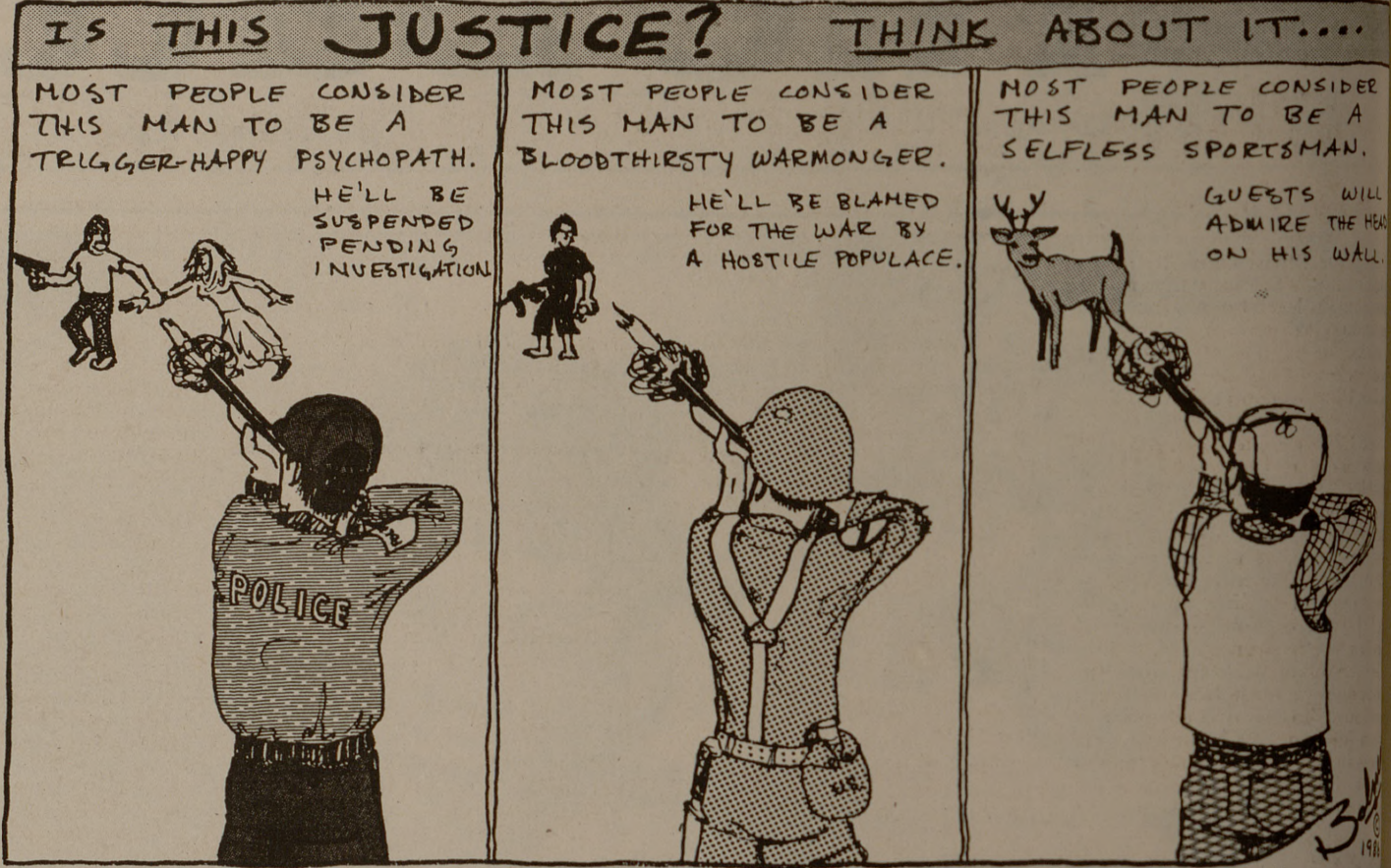
The Battalion is published Monday through Friday during Texas A&M regular semesters, except for holiday and examination periods.

Mail subscriptions are \$17.44 per semester, \$34.62 per school year and \$36.44 per full year. Advertising rates furnished on request.

Our address: *The Battalion*, 216 Reed McDonald Building, Texas A&M University, College Station, TX 77843.

Second class postage paid at College Station, TX 77843.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to *The Battalion*, 216 Reed McDonald, Texas A&M University, College Station TX 77843.



Is there a conflict?

Texas A&M has requested the attorney general's opinion on whether a transaction between the University and Granada Development Co., partly owned by Board of Regents Chairman David Eller, constitutes a conflict of interest. Although Eller's involvement with both the company and the proposed research deal is minimal, a potential conflict does exist. Such an apparent conflict can be just as damaging as an actual one and could harm A&M's image and integrity.

Under the proposed agreement, the Texas Agricultural Experiment Station would work with GDC on research and development projects. Under the proposal, GDC would fund the projects and in return receive exclusive marketing and sales licenses of the products. The University would receive royalties, which haven't been agreed upon.

The University engaged in other such agreements with GDC before Eller became a member.

But going through with the transaction now would show bad ethical judgment on the University's part. Despite the prospective benefits of the deal, the ends do not justify the means.

To those unfamiliar with the University, GDC or the details of the transaction — particularly other companies and the general public — Eller could appear to be using his influence as a regent to win the contract for his company.

As ridiculous as it may seem to those directly involved, the University should not put itself in a position where interests could be perceived as conflicting.

While the agreement may seem too good to pass up now, the University later may have to sacrifice more than it's bargaining for. If the GDC-A&M transaction appears to be the result of Eller's dual interests, other corporations may question the University's integrity in the future and be leery of making contracts.

In short, while Eller's relationship with the University probably had nothing to do with GDC's involvement in the deal, it still makes the University look bad.

That A&M sought the attorney general's opinion shows it's treating the matter with due concern. But while the attorney general may find no actual conflict, the University should not overlook the potential ones, either.

A school the size of A&M can't afford to risk effects on its image because it ignored the ethical backlash from an apparent interest conflict. It is best to avoid even the appearance of impropriety.

Back to the USSR

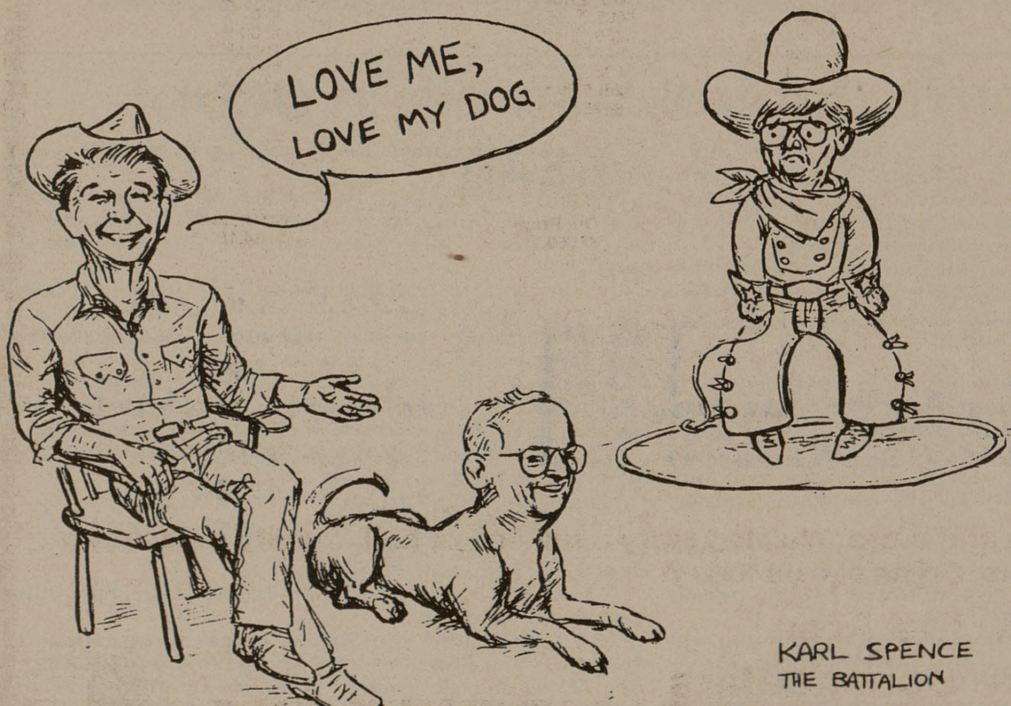
The Soviet Union's much-ballyhooed withdrawal of 8,000 troops from Afghanistan ended last Friday. The Kremlin keeps drawing attention to the removal, as if the Free World is supposed to be impressed by this sudden facade of compassion for the Afghan people. But the best response Moscow can hope for is, "So what?"

The troop withdrawal is meaningless. An estimated 115,000 Soviet soldiers still remain in Afghanistan to help the communist regime oppress Moslem rebels. And the troops that left still are stationed within easy marching distance of the Afghan border.

A few drops siphoned from the red tidal wave that has washed over Afghanistan will go unnoticed by the remaining troops and the rebels fighting them. Despite the Kremlin's hype over the miniscule maneuver, the Free World justifiably is unimpressed.

If the Soviets want to clean up their image, it will take a lot more than shuffling a few troops across a border. Even freedom for Afghanistan wouldn't begin to polish the Soviets' hopelessly tarnished human rights record.

If the Kremlin wants to impress the Free World, it could start with a real withdrawal from Afghanistan. We know better than to fall for its public relations decoys.



KARL SPENCE
THE BATTALION

Phone registration trial run overcomes initial skepticism

When Willis Ritchey, assistant registrar, called *The Battalion* Thursday and asked if one of the writers would be interested in testing the new phone registration system, I was happy to take advantage of the opportunity to register early.

I also was interested in testing the theories posed by some of my skeptical friends and professors about possible flaws in the system.

When I went to the Pavilion, Ritchey and John Hennessey, an A&M systems analyst, told me to read the registration manual provided in the spring class schedule and figure out exactly which classes I wanted.

I spent a few minutes whipping through the pages of the schedule, selecting my courses and times. When I was finished, Hennessey opened one of the 32 phone lines to the system and left me, phone in hand, to fend for myself.

I dialed the number in the manual and a man's deep voice greeted me. Ritchey says the man's voice was selected over a softer woman's voice because studies have shown that people are more willing to follow instructions given by an authoritative man's voice.

"Welcome to the Texas A&M information system," the voice said. "Enter an action code." I obeyed.

The voice then asked for my student I.D. number (social security number) and my personal identification number (my birthday). When I entered the wrong numbers, the voice told me to try again.

Mike Sullivan
Guest Columnist

After entering the correct numbers, the voice asked me for my class selections. To enter class numbers, I had to know the code for the subject of the class I wanted to take.

The subject code is listed in parenthesis next to all the course subjects as they appear alphabetically in the class schedule.

I made mistakes, punching the wrong numbers on a few course selections.

"The course number you entered is invalid," the voice said. "Please check, and enter your request now."

When I entered my last course selection, I got another message.

"You already have a class scheduled at the same time," the voice said. "Please enter your next request now."

Of course, it took me about five minutes to look up a class that didn't conflict with my schedule, and after about 30 seconds the voice warned me that the computer would hang up if I didn't enter a code soon. About 15 seconds later, the computer hung up on me.

I redialed the system, entered the code to list my classes, and the voice reassured me that my schedule still was intact.

I had to drop a class to work out my time conflict, a simple task considering I was the first student enrolled in all of my classes.

When I finished arranging my schedule, I pressed the fee options code and added a bus pass to my bill. I was looking forward to adding the diploma fee option to my bill, but it wasn't working at the time. Hennessey assured me that it would be ready for seniors by Monday.

After I had selected my fee options, entered the code requesting the voice read them back to me, and then I pressed the exit code.

The voice told me that an account statement and a bill would be mailed and then the computer hung up. My took about eight minutes, but I was taking notes about the process during the call.

Hennessey says he expects the call average around six to seven minutes. Bills will be generated by the computer every Saturday evening and will be mailed the following Monday.

Students can call during their designated registration week and check their schedules as many times as they want, but after their registration week the computer will not let students log into the system until Dec. 8 when registration begins.

There won't be any registration terminals in the Pavilion until the week of open registration, beginning Jan. 7, but students can enter a code during their calls, and an operator will help them with any problems they might be having with the system.

I have to admit that I approached the phone system with a bit of skepticism but like anything new, once I got a hang of the process it was really simple. Granted, I was the only person using the system at the time. The real test comes next week, and Hennessey says he's looking forward to it.

Mike Sullivan is a senior journalism major and a staff writer for *The Battalion*.

Mail Call

Credit for food processors

EDITOR:

I would like to compliment Anthony S. Casper on a well written and researched article "They don't taste bad but..." (Oct. 29).

Food processors deserve some credit though for the high degree of concern they have demonstrated for consumer satisfaction and product safety. For example, H.J. Heinz lobbied heavily in favor of the Food and Drug Act in 1906. Also, the canning industry developed stringent process requirements that were later adopted by the Food and Drug Administration as regulatory law.

U.S. companies now employ scientific staffs often numbering hundreds of people to ensure that they are bringing the public agricultural goods at the peak of harvest freshness and quality. Agribusiness contributes 20 percent to the American gross national product and helps form the base of our economy along with manufacturing and transportation. As consumers, we can all depend on a stable, wholesome and nutritious food supply because of the efforts of an American industry still unmatched by the rest of the world.

Randy K. Hobert '87

Overlooked atrocities

EDITOR:

This is in response to Leon Luxemburg's letter to the editor (Nov. 4).

Although I do not approve of the killing of innocent people of any nationality or religion, I think it would have been more objective on Luxemburg's side also to mention the atrocities that have been committed by Israel this century. To give just a few examples (for the list is really endless): the continuous Israeli air raids in Lebanon on the Palestinian refugee camps, with the resulting killing of hundreds of people (men, women and children); occupation in Gaza and the West Bank; and, yes, the well documented 1948 massacre of Deir Yassien, in Palestine, led then by Menachem Begin, the "Nobel Peace Prize

Winner." This last massacre was aimed then to scare the Arab civilians out of their homes.

Finally, I advise Luxemburg that the Arabs cannot be "anti-Semitic," because, as he might well know, the Arab race itself is ethnically Semitic.

Ahmad Jarrah

Lacking usual flair

EDITOR:

We were disappointed with Karl Pallmeyer's review of the Festival of India Tuesday. The quality of the writing was not up to his usual standard and some of his observations were inaccurate.

Orissi dance is the classical dance of India, more rigorous even than ballet. The hands do tell the story, but there are also prescribed positions of the eyes and eyebrows that convey meaning. Also, not all dances are narrative; many are prayers, with the hands and eyes supplying the petitions. Finally, Pallmeyer's statement that the audience grew bored was not true of the students seated around us.

Nor did the music sound "monotonous" to our Western ears. We noticed especially that the background singer's nonsense syllables matched the dancers' feet, creating a complex counterpoint to the melody. Certainly the raga limits Indian musicians in their improvisations. But the chord structure of a Western piece equally limits a jazz musician. Furthermore, a 4/4 measure is much more constricting than a 15-beat tala.

Let's hope that in the future Pallmeyer will do more research before he writes a review.

Anne Gwin '90
Joseph Galewsky '90

Letters to the editor should not exceed 300 words in length. The editor 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 classification, address and telephone number of the writer.