

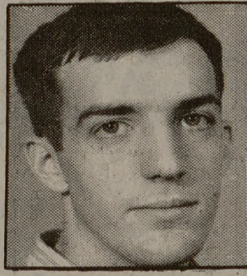
Opinion

Changing attitudes put bike riders' lives in peril

I was blessed this semester. I won a Schwinn 10-speed bicycle in a drawing. It was a nice big red one — a rather expensive semi-touring bike.

So far, it has been my only method of transportation, save an infrequent borrowing of a friend's car. My bike gets me to campus from my apartment in 15 minutes, about the same time it used to take me to leave the dorm and walk to class. With a trusty, inexpensive backpack to carry all my worldly possessions in, I can ride about campus at will.

Riding a bike full-time is a new experience for me. With monthly bills to pay, time is an important element, especially when I am paid by the hour. I can now work at the Military Procurement Center by bonfire and in five minutes be in class on the seventh floor of the O&M building.



Mark Ude

This is a new experience, because I have spent the past four years walking to class, which is not bad in itself. There was a time when Aggies said "Howdy!" and walking along a sidewalk was a pleasurable time well spent. But in those four years, I had to spend another 15 to 20 minutes getting my uniform into a presentable appearance. This adds to the time that one has to drag himself out of the bag, and leads to the ability to decide that lateness is inexcusable, then promptly roll over and go back to sleep.

Once I got used to jumping on my bike and screaming across campus at Mach 3, I became spoiled. I can't understand how I ever bore up under the amount of time wasted just going to class.

Seriously, I usually cruise the course at a leisurely speed, seeking out familiar faces to spend five minutes conversing with. Not seeing other people for a couple of weeks cancels out any benefit from a quarter hour's wage. Especially when I may not see them after I graduate this December.

But for various reasons, I quit riding my 10-speed this week. The first reason being because of the cold, wet and nasty weather we have had. I stomached the first norther we had, though there was no joy in riding in that cold front. There is just so much one can take, even bundled up in a Sierra Nevada Expedition suit and still freezing.

The second reason was due to the increasing number of close shaves with death. Death for bicyclists comes in many ways. Cars whose drivers feel they own the road are bad enough, but when the drivers erect crosshairs on the hood one starts to worry. Those guys who were popping darts at bikers didn't help matters.

The last point of concern is the number of wicked stares from pedestrians. Not that I am running others off the sidewalk, but there seems to be a feeling of ill will toward bikers. There are times when I expect the next movement I see by pedestrians to be a foot kicking in my spokes. While I do agree that pedestrians have a case against bikers

who have blatant disregard toward others in the pursuit of flight, that grudge has a tendency to be applied to all bike riders.

There is a different world among bikers, something not present in the environment of pedestrians. Bikers are friendlier than pedestrians at least to other bikers. One can actually get a response from fellow bikers, even when I head at Mach 3. I have attempted to say "Howdy" to pedestrians as I ride past, but I have been with limited success. Even cadets don't respond much as they used to. Such negative vibes as to whether I am on or off the bike.

Maybe the situation will change, but I don't think so. The attitude now is almost a vicious one when an unfortunate biker is thrown head over heels after colliding with a bench, fire hydrant, shrub. What many people forget is that on the whole, the majority of mishaps are a result of bikers attempting to avoid pedestrians.

Mark Ude is a senior geography major and a columnist for The Battalion.

Mail Call

Hit the road, Jackie

EDITOR:

The *Dallas Morning News* ran a story on Texas colleges and what the nation's academic leaders thought about them. The only poor mark Texas A&M received was in student quality. This is a result of the overemphasis on sports in Texas' high schools (Gov. Mark White was right). This overemphasis seems to have reached A&M. In a time of budget cuts, A&M continues to put huge amounts of money into athletics. The *News* quoted A&M President Frank Vandiver defending sports in the academic world. He said sports encourage former students to contribute to the school.

If sports is the only reason old Ags give money to A&M, we do not deserve the title of "world-class university." A school is not measured by its football team, but by its capability to teach. If we want a world-class university, we should cut back drastically in athletic expenditures and use the money to attract more high-quality faculty. I have one suggestion for Vandiver: Give A&M Athletic Director Jackie Sherrill the option of taking a big salary cut or going to coach at another school.

Tye Biasco '88

Preventative ounce

EDITOR:

I would like to elaborate on my letter regarding money for AIDS research (Nov. 14) because responses from John Davis and Vanessa Paulley (Nov. 19) reveal several misunderstandings.

First, although Paulley charged that my view was unsympathetic, the statement that "I cannot fathom the agony" experienced by an AIDS victim was meant to communicate the utmost sympathy. On the other hand, the main question raised was whether society should be moved to care for AIDS victims who did not themselves care enough to avoid an obvious danger.

Secondly, I did not imply that those who are careless in their sexual relationships "deserve" to contract a deadly disease; it is simply a matter of risk and consequence.

Thirdly, this view makes no distinction between homosexual relationships and heterosexual relationships in this regard.

Most difficult, however, is the question of those whose sexual behavior has nothing to do with their infection by AIDS. Among fatal diseases, are there greater numbers of other "innocents," present and future, for whom we should be more concerned? Is it wise to pour a thousand million dollars into the study of a disease whose primary mode of infection has already been identified and against which no drug or vaccination is required for most individuals to protect themselves, when there are other deadly diseases which remain far less predictable.

Perhaps it appears cruel to express a hesitance to support research that's main beneficiaries are those who have chosen to risk their own lives unnecessarily. But to those who are unwilling to change behavior which endangers everyone, we see a greater cruelty when we recall the young patient dying of AIDS transmitted through a blood transfusion and repeat John Davis' question: "What about the child?"

An ounce of prevention.

Paul Koch

Simplistic solutions

EDITOR:

Syndicated columnist Lewis Grizzard's Nov. 18 simple (and simplistic) solution to the teen pregnancy problem is to get more teen-agers to use birth control by making it readily available through school-based health clinics.

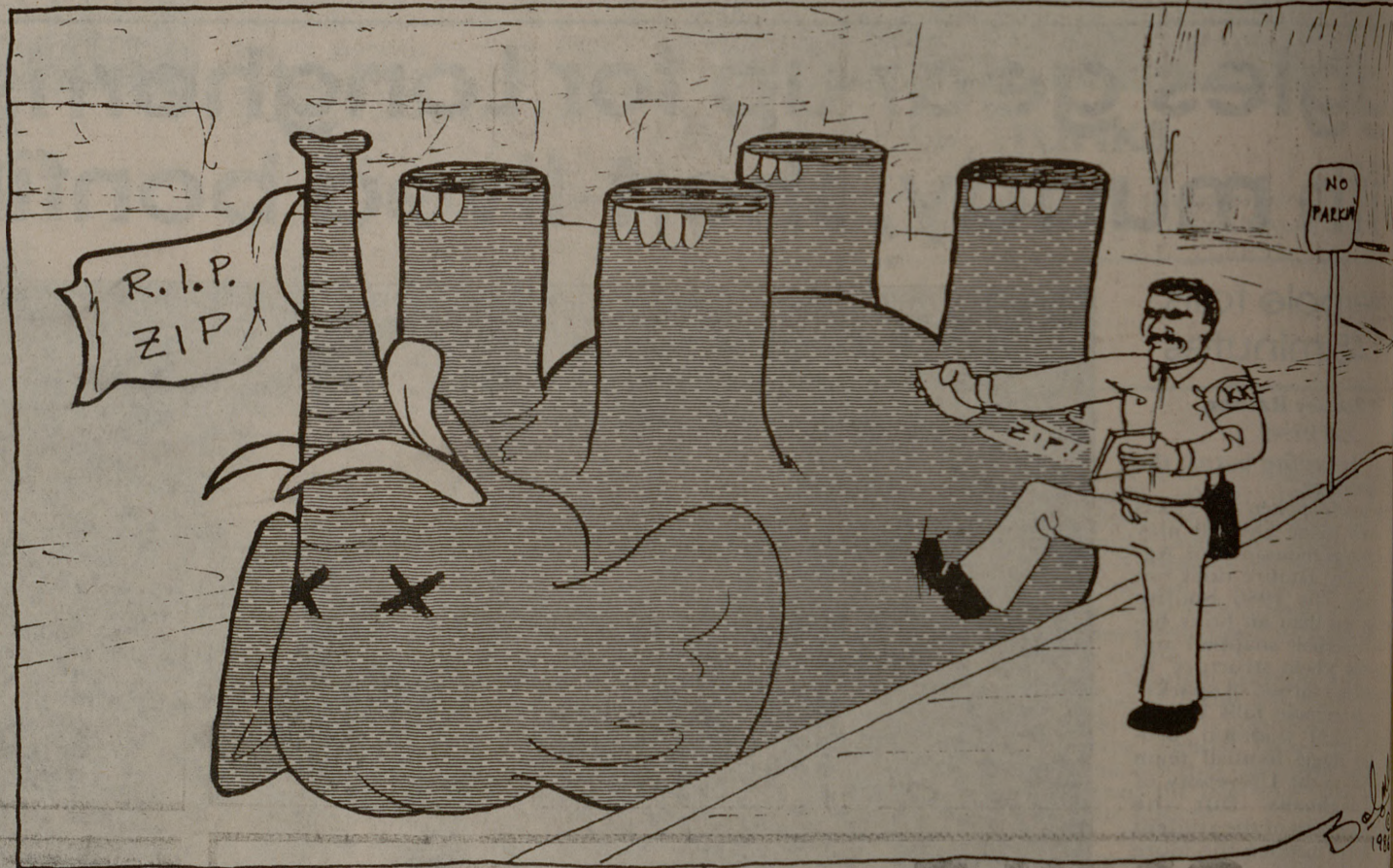
Fifteen years ago, we were promised that sex education combined with free contraceptives via groups like Planned Parenthood would solve our teen pregnancy problem. A recent study by the House Select Committee on Children, Youth and Families (December, 1985) found that, despite sex education and contraceptive distribution programs, "there has been no change in the percentage of sexually active teens who become pregnant, but there has been a huge increase in the percentage of teens who are sexually active. And this increase in sexual activity has led to a proportionate increase in pregnancies to unmarried teens (67 percent from 1971-1979)."

The decreased teen birth rate in St. Paul (1977-79) widely cited as justification for school dispensing of birth control pills is quite misleading in that it failed to report the 25-percent decrease in female student population during that same time period and also failed to report the pregnancy rate. An increased abortion rate combined with fewer female students accounts for the decreased teen birth rate rather than the decrease in fertility rate implied in the study. By contrast, the enactment of a Minnesota law in 1981 requiring parental notification for abortions correlates with a 40-percent decrease in abortions, a 23.4-percent decrease in pregnancies and a 32-percent decrease in teen pregnancies in that state.

Progressively over the last 25 years, we have as a nation decided that it is easier to give children pills than to teach them respect for sex and marriage. With regard to this issue, William Raspberry of the *Washington Post* recently commented, "Those charged with the education and development of our children have a responsibility not to abdicate fundamental values, even when they are widely ignored. That 'everybody is doing it' is in the first place, not true and, in the second, no justification for abandoning our duty to say to the young people under our charge: 'You shouldn't!'"

Walter L. Bradley
Professor of Mechanical Engineering

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Corporate raiders vital threat to Wall Street's inefficiencies

The journalistic imperative, like the territorial one for wolves, governs us all. We seek information and, if we cannot get it ourselves, we turn to those who can. It is for this reason that God created both journalists and arbiters, the former to make us wise, the latter to make us rich.



Richard Cohen

Until just recently, Ivan Boesky plied the arbitrage trade, making what Wall Street considers a living. He was supposed to be brilliant, to be informed — to have all the skinny that a 20-hour day on the telephone should elicit. He was not supposed to pay inside informants or trade on that information.

The Securities and Exchange Commission charges Boesky did just that. In a financial arrangement with at least one Wall Street merger specialist, Dennis Levine of Drexel Burnham Lambert, Boesky agreed to pay for privileged information about upcoming mergers. He bought into companies about to be gobbled up and later sold at a handsome profit. That information did not come by dint of working his telephone console like a mighty Wurlitzer, but from a corrupt relationship. For that, he has paid the price — \$100 million in fines and restitution, to be exact.

The distinction between information honestly and industriously arrived at and information bought by dint of corruption is worth keeping in mind. For already, the sins of Boesky are being cited by those who want to severely restrict the recent wave of mergers — some \$178 billion in 1985, maybe \$200 billion this year. Many bills to that effect were introduced in the last session of Congress and more are sure to come. Wall Street, some people think, needs a thorough cleaning.

Yes and no. Clearly, there is something worrisome about a financial environment that overemphasizes short-

term profit and therefore the price of the stock. Research and development, often so expensive and chancy, is sometimes slighted so that the bottom line will look good to short-term investors. The danger is that in the long run there will be no long run.

But there is more than a whiff of self-interest in some of the calls for reform. In some cases, corporate America, that cathedral of hypocrisy, is once again running to the federal government for protection. For some executives, nothing is worse than having their performance evaluated by the marketplace and not their colleagues. There goes the annual bonus.

Corporate raiders and their counsels, the arbs, are not an attractive lot. Many of them are Wall Street arrivists, not clubby types. (Indeed, the difference between the nouveau-riche raiders and the more tony members of, say, the Downtown Athletic Club, is that the former, less secure socially, keep their clothes on while swapping inside information.) But for all their rough edges, they provide a service — a threat to inefficiency. Without them, some elements of corporate America would be content to retain their slothful ways.

Deputy Treasury Secretary Richard Darman characterized corporate America in a recent speech as "bloated, risk-averse, inefficient and unimaginative." Darman had two purposes. The first was simply to get our attention — to make us wonder if the nation is being well-served by its corporate culture. The second was to warn corporate America

not to look to government to ward off raiders — to keep it living in the manner to which it has become accustomed. That manner, while rewarding to executives involved, has seen American business become less and less competitive. Space does not permit a listing of high-risk "junk bonds" used in finance takeovers, maybe a 60-day period in which newly purchased stock cannot be voted. And, if it is not too good an idea, Congress ought to consider the plight of workers who, through no fault of their own, are "merged" out of business.

But just as all corporate executives are not "inefficient and unimaginative," not all arbiters or corporate raiders are corrupt. The good ones serve a purpose and it would be wrong, as well as damaging to the economy, to indiscriminately penalize them all.

Some reform is needed, but it comes to dealing with inside trading. The best legislation needs only to be applied — a good stiff punishment. Nothing will deter trading so much as seeing one of their own go down on the inside.

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(USPS 045 360)

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

Opinions expressed in *The Battalion* are those of the author, and do not necessarily represent those of Texas A&M administrators, faculty or the Board of Regents.

The Battalion also serves as a laboratory newspaper in reporting, editing and photography classes within the Department of Journalism.

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

Mail subscriptions are \$17.44 per semester, \$34.88 per year and \$36.44 per full year. Advertising rates furnished upon request.

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

Second class postage paid at College Station, TX 77843. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to *The Battalion*, Reed McDonald, Texas A&M University, College Station, TX 77843.