

# Opinion

## The Battalion

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

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## Bench SMU

The SMU Mustangs need to be roped, tied and just plain saddle-broken or they'll continue their record-breaking probation status, tainting the image of the already tarnished Southwest Conference.

Last August, Southern Methodist University's football program was placed on probation by the National Collegiate Athletic Association for the fifth time — more than any other college football team.

Despite the NCAA's ruling, SMU continued to break the rules and allegedly has continued supporting at least two of its athletes with cash allowances and free room and board.

Other college football teams around the nation probably are involved in shady deals, but continuing to violate the rules shows a complete lack of respect for the rules and the teams in the conference.

The worst part is that the odor from SMU's barn is stinking up the entire Southwest Conference. Albeit other schools aren't acting as much of a deodorant. But the result of all this is that more honest football teams in the conference are getting manure thrown on their jerseys by other ever-critical football conferences.

In all fairness, the NCAA needs to focus its spotlight evenly on all schools. But SMU's flagrant disregard for regulations cannot go unpunished. It's time for the NCAA to shut down SMU's football program and rid the Southwest Conference of this saddle sore.

## Hopes and fears

Clashes between Palestinian youths and Israeli troops have been going on for days in the little town of Bethlehem on the Occupied West Bank — yes, that Bethlehem.

The violence spread to within 100 yards of the Church of the Nativity, a site that was nothing more than a manger until a rather special child was born there.

He's frequently called the Prince of Peace, but, 2,000 years after his birth, the frequent fighting that surrounds his birthplace serves as a painful reminder that few people have gotten the message.

## Weapons deal with Iran was Reagan's last shot at credibility

In the vast cathedral called Washington, the policy monks scurry around murmuring dire warnings about a presidency adrift. Nothing could be worse, they wail, no outcome of the present scandal more dangerous than a Reagan administration too weak to implement its foreign policy. This is the dirge of fools.



Richard Cohen

It would be one thing if the Reagan administration was on a foreign-policy roll. But in this area, the administration is bereft of successes. Its most glorious triumph, trumpeted time and time again, was the invasion and occupation of Grenada — a dot in the Caribbean that, unfortunately, set Reagan on a collision course with reality.

What followed was some stirring moments — the bombing of Libya, the sending of Marines to Lebanon, the downing of an Egyptian airliner taking terrorists to freedom — but they all seem to have been to no avail. The Marines died in Lebanon and while the bombing of Libya was brutal, it neither ended terrorism nor freed our hostages. In the end, the president had to do what he pledged he would not: barter for the lives of Americans. Whatever that episode might be — a scandal, an outrage or a wholesale violation of the law — it can hardly be called a success.

All this is by way of saying that the drone of the soulful policy monks drowns out the gleeful rubbing of more than a few hands. Some in Washington see the present crisis as nothing less than a wonderful opportunity. This is the moment to force the president to seek a bipartisan foreign policy. This is one of the reasons why important senators are calling for the heads of key presidential aids, including Chief of Staff Donald Regan.

It will hardly matter if Regan is proven to have known nothing about Lt. Col. Oliver North's one-man foreign policy. His credibility is not the issue; his competence is. He has to go so that others can be let in.

The turning point for both Reagan and Regan probably was their joint belly-flop at Reykjavik. There, with Regan looking on, an ill-prepared president faced a boned-up Soviet leader. American conservatives were appalled at what Regan put on the table — either the complete elimination of all ballistic missiles or all nuclear weapons — and breathed a sigh of relief when the talks collapsed. Liberals, on the other hand, were appalled that Regan walked away from so handsome an offer.

Regan won the post-Reykjavik public-relations battle. But he left too many important people convinced that something was terribly amiss at the White House. The president and his staff seemed inept — poorly advised or, worse, not advised at all — and afterward unsure of what, in fact, the United States had offered the Soviets. The public opinion polls showed that the spin doctors succeeded in convincing the people that Reykjavik was a triumph. Official Washington, doing a double-take, concluded otherwise. It was a debacle.

The current scandal of guns for hostages for Contra cash was both the last straw and a chance to make some changes. Whatever the policy's ultimate intentions, what astonishes Washington is the sheer amateurishness of the effort — its reliance on dash and daring at the expense of wisdom. To implement the policy, those who know most about foreign affairs — including the State Department — were kept in the dark. Also ignored were the key foreign-policy players on Capitol Hill. The disaster that followed was predictable — and could have been predicted by knowledgeable people.

Nicaragua remains the greatest dan-

## Why do donations make people feel satisfied?

While giving a lecture on the rapidly growing world population and world hunger, my science professor showed the class a slide of a starving African child holding an empty dinner pail.



Mike Sullivan

The naked boy's leather skin was stretched over his stick-like bones, and his eyes were sunken deep into his skull. His dry mouth hung open and there were flies on his teeth. That he was standing on his own was nothing short of miraculous. If he hadn't been standing, I would have thought he was dead.

Trading glances between the slide of

the child and the class of about 70 students, my professor began speaking about the boy and his unfortunate situation.

A few of the students gasped as they learned of the child's hopeless future. But like myself, most of the students seemed unmoved by the picture and perhaps bored with the professor's sermon.

I've seen pictures of starving children many times before. I've seen their pictures on TV, in magazines, and I've heard about the starving children on the radio. The message always is that, "The children are starving to death and they need my help now."

But for me the pictures have lost their shock value, and I've never really paid much attention to the messages. I'm aware of the starving children all over the world. I know about Live Aid, Band Aid, etc., but I've never donated to the cause. And, though I believe it's a worthy cause, I probably never will contribute.

It may sound like I'm inhuman, but I'm just honest. I'm being honest when I say that it's easy for me to ignore the persistent cries of the starving. I'm being honest when I pliantly say, "No, I don't have 42 cents a day to feed a hungry Ethiopian child." And I'm being honest when I say I can sleep just as easily at night.

I'll bet that 99 percent of the students on this campus can ignore the cries, rationalize their excuses and sleep just as well as I can. After all, ignoring a problem that never has and most likely never will directly touch our lives is really quite logical.

Perhaps my apathetic attitude toward world problems stems from a lack of tangible evidence. I've never actually seen a starving child in person, nor have I ever heard one cry. There's a lot of things I've never seen or touched, and most of those things don't rank very high on my list of concerns.

Or maybe I think I can afford my indifference because I know that inevitably somebody does care enough about a problem like starvation to try to help it. Of course, I'm smart enough to know that that person or group probably could use my help.

But not getting involved can be again rationalized away with my "lack of tan-

gible evidence" argument. They ask me to help out, but it's usually in the form of a money donation. How do I really know they need my money? What, exactly, will it be spent on? It's exceedingly difficult to prove to me that somebody else needs my \$10 more than I do. It's even harder to convince me over a phone or through an advertisement.

Whether I donate or not makes no difference on a world level, but my attitude toward local problems is different. I've tossed change into cans we've stopped at stoplights. I've donated to local drives, and I've even given blood. But donating to causes close home requires little effort, and I've never see exactly where my donations go. I generally feel good about my contributions.

After recently donating a can of beans to a food drive, I thought about why donating to local causes makes me feel good, and donating to world causes has never interested me.

Apathy is the easy answer, but I don't think that's the more realistic, probably quite universal.

Though there are some truly generous people in the world, most are in this game for themselves. The "little, get a little" ideal that has been stilled in all of us from childhood allows that people donate, or give, because they hope to get something in return.

Maybe they hope somebody is taking notes, or maybe they want a little recognition — or a lot, depending on the size of the contribution from their friends and peers. Perhaps those who donate are looking forward to the nice tax break they'll get for their generosity. Whatever it is, it has to be something in it for the donor.

That would explain why the starving children doesn't bother me. Unless I told everybody about my donation, I'd get no recognition, and I'm too concerned about tax breaks.

As for whoever's watching me from above, I'm sure my can of beans is good enough in his all-accepting eyes.

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

### Good tunes, poor transmission

EDITOR:

The A&M radio station KANM, 99.9 FM, has some of the best alternative music I've ever had the pleasure of listening to. All the disc jockeys have spirit, intelligence and discriminating tastes.

However, the sound quality is totally ragged, fuzzy, and distorted. Where is the pride in putting out a quality audio experience? I know there is a budget problem, but so far no one at the radio station has responded to my plea for technical improvements. Why?

The mindless pop-pop on commercial stations is awful, but the hissing fizz on KANM is worse. Does anyone care? Will Aggie pride give us a radio station to listen to? Help!

Russ Newsom

### Don't give a spit

EDITOR:

Will someone please explain to me why so many people here at Aggieland spit? One can't help but notice the disgusting little blobs lining the walkways from Kyle Hall to the Zachry Engineering Center. I don't care if it is the season — carry a tissue, go to the bathroom, or at least use the grassy areas.

Nobody likes somebody else's bodily fluids. As George Carlin so memorably noted, "You'd wipe it on flaming wood if you had to." Gotta run — time for class. Here I slip-sliding away.

Paula DeForest

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