

Opinion

The Battalion

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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.

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Final fiasco

President Vandiver's new policy for final examinations itself is in need of careful examination.

Beginning Spring 1988, finals for all students — including graduating seniors — will begin on Friday and Saturday of what is now dead week and continue on Monday and Tuesday of the following week. This plan is supposedly a compromise to benefit students, faculty and administrators, but what's really being compromised is common sense.

The policy was adopted so professors would not have to give final exams twice. But the resulting problems are not worth the convenience.

An obvious problem is that students will have less time to prepare for their exams. Students who have lab finals and projects due during dead week will have exactly one evening — Thursday — to prepare for finals the next day. And Saturday, a day previously set aside for all-day study sessions, will be devoted, at least in part, to finals.

That, in itself, wouldn't be so bad if the new schedule had other merits. It doesn't.

Because grades for graduating seniors are due Tuesday evening after the last exams, professors have less time for thorough grading.

Further, a glitch in the computer system could postpone graduation, which, according to the new plan, already is pushed back to the weekend after finals.

Considering the system's track record, it's only a matter of time before this happens, infuriating thousands of graduates — not to mention parents.

Instead of implementing the new plan, why not follow the recommendations of student and faculty senators and administrators who studied the problem extensively? This plan allows graduating seniors to take finals during dead week and the rest of the student body to take exams during the regular finals week.

The idea of requiring seniors to take finals isn't unreasonable, but inconveniencing faculty members, 33,000 undergraduates and risking the postponement of commencement is.

Please read this column

Judith Martin, AKA Miss Manners, was once my colleague at the *Washington Post*, so I'm sure she'll excuse me if I dub myself Mr. Manners. I was raised to say "Thank You," to pardon myself when interrupting and to ask to be excused when leaving the table, upon which I was not permitted to put my elbows: "Richard, Richard, well and able, take your elbows off the table." I did.



Richard Cohen

fer Richard or Dick, and even worse is my refusal to give an honest answer: "Mr. Cohen would be just fine." I say nothing like that, though, and pretty soon some guy I never met before is calling me by my nickname.

I have a similar difficulty when I call an airline for a reservation. First, I get a machine that tells me that all the reservation clerks are busy but, in the words of United Airlines, the next available clerk will be with me when he or she is available. Then comes the worst part. A woman answers and says, "Hi, this is Debbie." What am I supposed to say? "Hi, this is Dickie?" I've called to find out if there's a flight to Akron and here I am talking to some lady as if she just sat down next to me in a cocktail lounge: "Hi, I'm, Debbie. What's your sign?" "Aquarius, Debbie. Do you fly to Akron?"

Back in the days when stewardesses were pronounced obsolete after they either married or turned 30, I found myself unable to handle these Flying Flirts. They were instantly so friendly, so warm — so inquiring. "What's your name?" "What do you do for a living?" It all made me very uncomfortable. I knew they were not interested in me — not my personality, anyway. I used to envy guys who could banter with the stewards, who seemed not to know, or not to care, that the women were being paid to be friendly. There is a word for that.

I need time to establish relationships. I like to go from Mr. Cohen to Richard to...may I call you Dick? Each step is a doorway through which I alone want to do the admitting. To call me Dick right off, to announce that you are Debbie, is tantamount to barging right in. Who invited you? What do you want? You don't even care about me. Leave me alone!

The fact is, I have been programmed to respond to people in certain ways. And the fact is that machines and their human equivalents have been programmed to take advantage of the way I have been programmed. Like Don Quixote, I was raised for a bygone age. Waiters announce their names to me. Who cares? AT&T thanks me for using it when, most of the time, I don't even have a choice.

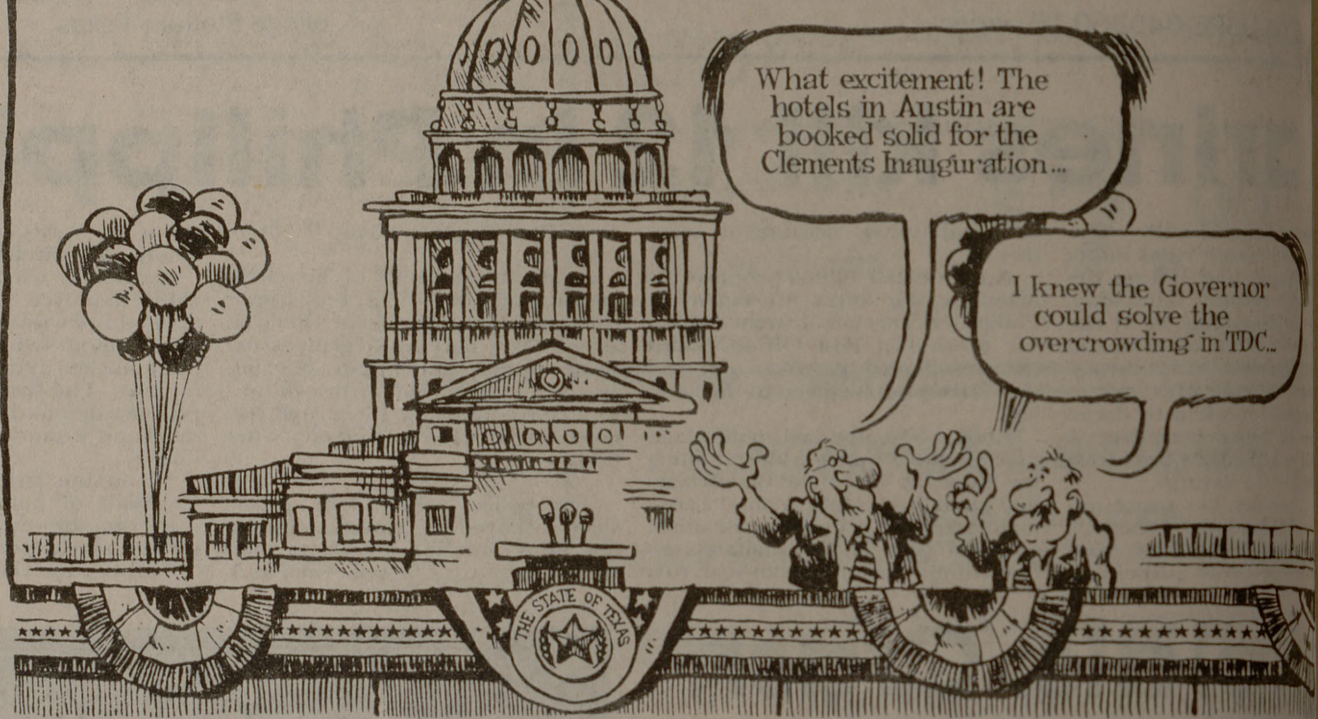
I cling to the lessons of childhood. I respond to talking cars, lamposts I brush and call people by their titles. I am the Mr. Manners of the technological age, tilting at machines as if they were people and, slowly, treating people as if they were machines.

Thank you for reading this.

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MARGULIES

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Don't mess with destiny

I always believed a person was responsible for the events that happened in his or her life. I was certain that I controlled my circumstances — good or bad. If something awful happened it was my fault because I made a mistake or I let someone else make it for me. But of course, that's not always true. I found that out the hard way on my first ski trip during the holidays.



Jo Streit

My boyfriend and I started planning the trip in October and decided to include four of our friends — actually, I had never met two of those friends before, but it turned out we all got along great. After all our planning, budgeting and anticipation the day to leave finally arrived. Unfortunately, two of the guys we were supposed to meet at the airport didn't show.

The rest of us sat in the airport bar waiting and cussing about the other two being late. While we were in the bar, a live news report from the airport came on the TV located above the counter. The report said a man was holding a ten-year-old boy hostage and was demanding a plane and safe passage out of the country. We ignored most of the report — after all it was our vacation, and we couldn't be concerned about everything that was going on in the world. The time of our departure finally came and, with no sign of our friends, we did the only thing we could. We left without them.

It turned out our friends missed the flight to Colorado because they were being held on board their plane from Houston until the gunman in Dallas could be arrested. And we just assumed they were irresponsible and missed the flight.

We learned later what happened, but as it turned out, we had our own troubles. After our plane landed in the Durango airport, we were greeted by someone from the resort we were staying at. They took care of our luggage and we took the bus to go get our ski rentals. Everything went smoothly until we got to Tamarron — the place we were staying. Tamarron has a main lodge and adjacent condos for their guests. We were staying in a three-bedroom condo, but it was too far to walk to from the lodge. Tamarron provides a shuttle service to the condos, so we gathered up our carry-on luggage and piled in — about thirty people total.

We slowly started up the hill in front of the main lodge and just when we reached the top, the engine died. We started rolling back down the hill, and to our regret the tire chains proved useless on the icy road. We slid about 75 yards, gaining speed the whole way down. No one screamed. Everyone just calmly hung on, except for our bus driver who managed two words — "We're dead."

On that courageous note, we fell off a ten-foot drop and crashed into a lake. The back doors of the bus blew open, and water covered the people in the rear of the shuttle. Some of the seats were ripped out, along with a chunk of

one guy's hair. He later asked if Tamarron's insurance covered hair loss. Luckily, we all walked away without any serious injuries, only a few bruises, minor cuts from broken glass and for one guy a sizeable bald spot.

The bus driver sat paralyzed in his seat. Someone yelled at him to open the doors. We grabbed our stuff and got off the bus before it tipped over and sank to the bottom of the lake. As I reached the top of the bank I turned back and looked at the bus. My boyfriend was helping get the skis off the side of the bus, a girl who came on the trip with us was taking pictures, and I was standing there laughing.

So much for controlling your circumstances. If I had had my way, we would

have already been Unpacked and in our rooms. But I didn't. I learned I can't control everything in your life. Keeping a sense of humor about what will help you live through it.

The next day, we spent about hours taking ski lessons.

Most of us had never skied, so fun learning together. By the end of the week we were skiing intermediates and the guys even tried an expert. The rest of the trip was perfect. Crowds were gone so there was no waiting for the lifts — Colorado got the snow it had seen all winter during the week, and best of all no broken sprains or delays coming home.

Jo Streit is a senior journalist and a columnist for The Battalion.

Mail Call



Hopping mad

EDITOR:

As students walked to class Thursday morning, they were greeted by a fluorescent-green frog playing a trumpet as two other toads danced merrily about. As if this were not enough, the students beheld assorted jacks, turnstiles, mutant cacti, and "The Big Red Thing." Those who frequent the party scene in Dallas may remember the frog in front of a local bar. It is good to see that an exhibit that cannot make it in front of a bar can come to A&M and be called "art."

After such a culturally enriching experience, it was pleasing to discover that our campus would be graced with its presence until May 4. Gee, every time we go to class this semester, we can repeat this experience. What fun! I think that, while other schools display King Tut's exhibit, former students can return to our campus — for example, Parent's Day — and see this.

But seriously, while this exhibit may be attractive in other places, its contrast to A&M's campus creates nothing but an eyesore. We, and most likely other students, would appreciate its removal.

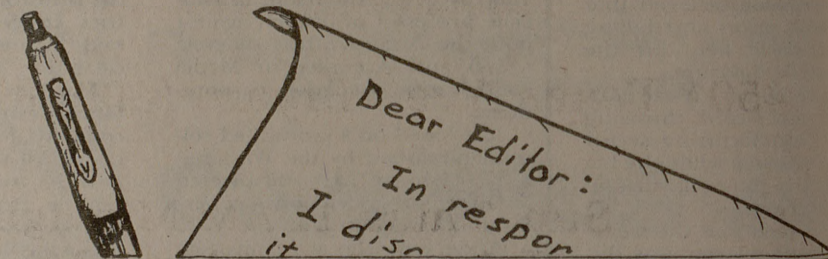
Joseph Mercurio '88
Accompanied by 11 signatures

Frozen Ags

EDITOR:

This is a letter concerning the new "modern art" in the vicinity of the Academic and Harrington buildings. First of all Ags, I'll agree with you that the stuff is pretty ugly! But what's fantastic about the whole situation is that this traditionally-thinking university has finally had the notion to do something out of the ordinary! It's good to know that university officials are thawing out of their ice age stances. I think it's great!

Chris Pantuso



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