

# Opinion

## The Battalion

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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.

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## Quest for excellence

Football fans must know by now that A&M's prized recruit, Darren Lewis, possibly won't see much turf next season because of a pitifully low Scholastic Aptitude Test score.

There is hope, however, for the running back from Dallas who scored 470 on the SAT — 230 points shy of the required NCAA score.

Luckily for A&M football fans and Lewis, who reportedly said he will sign a national letter of intent Wednesday to play for Texas A&M, the prized athlete is what the NCAA calls a "partial-qualifier." That means his SAT score is too low for the NCAA (and A&M) but his 2.0 grade-point ratio is just fine for the NCAA and, apparently, for A&M. Because he met the NCAA's (and A&M's) strict academic standards for athletes during his high school years, Lewis can retake the SAT and possibly qualify for a scholarship.

If his score miraculously jumps to 700 on his second attempt — he's enrolled in an SAT preparation course — Lewis successfully will have met the eligibility requirements for the NCAA and the admission requirements for A&M and will qualify for a scholarship to play football.

Lewis is one of the nation's top high school football prospects — he's extremely tempting for a school so thirsty for a number one football team. Just how big a temptation Lewis is for the Aggies will be discovered next fall. If, however, Lewis can't make the grade, he still can study at A&M his freshman year, but he won't be eligible to play football until his sophomore year.

In the world of higher education, no lack of academic prowess can keep an outstanding athlete on the sidelines for long.

## Trust the government?

On April 14, U.S. warplanes bombed Libya, killing 37 persons, among them a 15-month-old girl named Hana, reportedly Moammar Gadhafi's adopted daughter. The attack was in reprisal for the bombing days earlier of a West German discotheque frequented by U.S. servicemen. One serviceman was killed.



Richard Cohen

not believe our own government. The list of lies — and they are that — is getting longer and longer, and foremost among them was the repeated declaration that the United States would never pay ransom for hostages. We did just that — and did it repeatedly.

Another lie was that if the United States possessed hard information that other countries were engaged in terrorism, they would get a dose of what Libya got. "We have made it plain that if we have the same kind of irrefutable evidence with regard to other countries, they'll be subject to the same treatment," the president said on May 7. The information linking Iran to the kidnapers of American hostages was so irrefutable that we traded arms for their release.

When it comes to information — irrefutable or otherwise — I have none to contradict what the president said following the bombing of Libya. But as one who approved of that raid, I have the sinking feeling that I was in some sense taken — that the administration arbitrarily substituted Libya for Iran when, following the hijacking of a TWA flight to Beirut, it realized that Tehran and not Tripoli was the real paymaster of Middle East terrorists. Maybe we bombed Libya because it, almost alone among terrorist nations, was not holding American hostages. Or maybe Gadhafi lost a daughter because we were attempting to send a message not to him — but to the Ayatollah: In violation of our laws, we might try to assassinate a foreign leader.

I don't know. I do know that I no longer have the confidence in our government I once had. And I have to tell you that I had to ask Woodward, an extremely careful reporter, if his story about the Berlin to Tripoli intercepts was not itself the rotten fruit of a disinformation campaign. He did not think so. He said he had confidence in his sources, but acknowledged that the Iran disclosures had to raise some doubts. No one has the same confidence in administration statements they once had.

Cynicism — not any foreign-policy setback — may well be the worst consequence of the current scandal. By playing cute with the American people, by saying one thing and doing another and by using "disinformation," the Reagan administration has weakened the fiber of the very democracy it was trying to protect. On April 14, the United States killed a child named Hana. Once I thought the bombing that caused her death was justified. Now I am not so sure. Are you?

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## College-educated people often don't know the facts

Last weekend I overheard a conversation between four girls in the restroom of a local bar. It started out something like this:



Paula Vogrin

"Really, I can't believe you're going to back out on us now. We went through all the trouble of getting some for you, and now you're not even going to do any with us."

"What's the matter? You really don't want to have any fun, do you?" The conversation continued in this manner, three of the girls trying to persuade the fourth to "do some" with them. The fourth obviously did not want to "do any" with them.

Finally, the fourth got irate, told the others she would find her own way home, and stormed out of the restroom.

The remaining three laughed loudly about what a square the fourth was, brushed their hair, applied more lipstick, perfume and blush, and left talking about how much fun they were going to have "X-ing."

I found it rather hard to believe that the trio of idiots had tried to convince the fourth girl to take a drug that she clearly wanted no part of.

I thought peer pressure like that happened only in teen books and on prime time television. I was wrong.

The thing that struck me about this whole episode was that three college women could be so excited about Ecstasy, a drug whose long- and short-term effects still are vague at best.

Ecstasy, or 3,4-methylenedioxymethamphetamine as it is known in the lab, isn't really a new drug. It was synthesized and patented in 1914 as an appetite suppressant. MDMA was never marketed as such, and was virtually forgotten until about 10 years ago, when it made its way into the offices of some therapists. From there, MDMA traveled to the homes of young professionals and college campuses, where it assumed its more common name of Ecstasy, or X.

About four years ago, it took the nightclub scene by storm. At clubs all over the country, Ecstasy could be purchased at the bar and paid for with American Express.

This practice ended in the summer of 1985, however, when the Drug Enforcement Agency slapped an emergency ban on Ecstasy after research associated the drug with possible brain damage. Ecstasy is now considered a Schedule I controlled substance. Its only legal use is in approved experimental settings.

Despite the ban and the drug's controlled substance classification (it ranks right up there with heroin, LSD, and marijuana), Ecstasy's use as a recreational drug has not decreased. If anything, its use has increased — especially at colleges. Yes, even at Texas A&M.

Students gladly pay anywhere from \$8 to \$25 for one hit—a 100-milligram capsule of the synthetic white powder. For their money, they get approximately four hours of contentment, self-acceptance, insight and loosened inhibitions. But with the purchase they also receive initial side effects of sweating, increased blood pressure and heart

rates, and after-effects — 24 hours of exhaustion and appetite loss.

Is it worth the price?

Animal studies performed at the University of Chicago by Lewis Seiden and Charles Schuster, two psychopharmacologists, indicate that Ecstasy causes long-term and perhaps irreversible effects on the brain. Serotonin, a neurotransmitter involved in the regulation of sex, sleep, aggression and mood, reached a dangerously low level in the animals injected regularly with the drug.

Seiden and Schuster concluded that doses harmful to the brain are only about two to three times larger than the average street dose. It was this conclusion that led the DEA to place the emergency ban on Ecstasy.

Why, then, is this drug so popular?

First and foremost, it's immediate effects are pleasurable. Only 15 minutes after taking the drug, the user feels happy and uninhibited without feeling out of control. And the immediate side effects are not severe enough to merit much concern. Unlike alcohol and marijuana, Ecstasy is not a depressant, so the

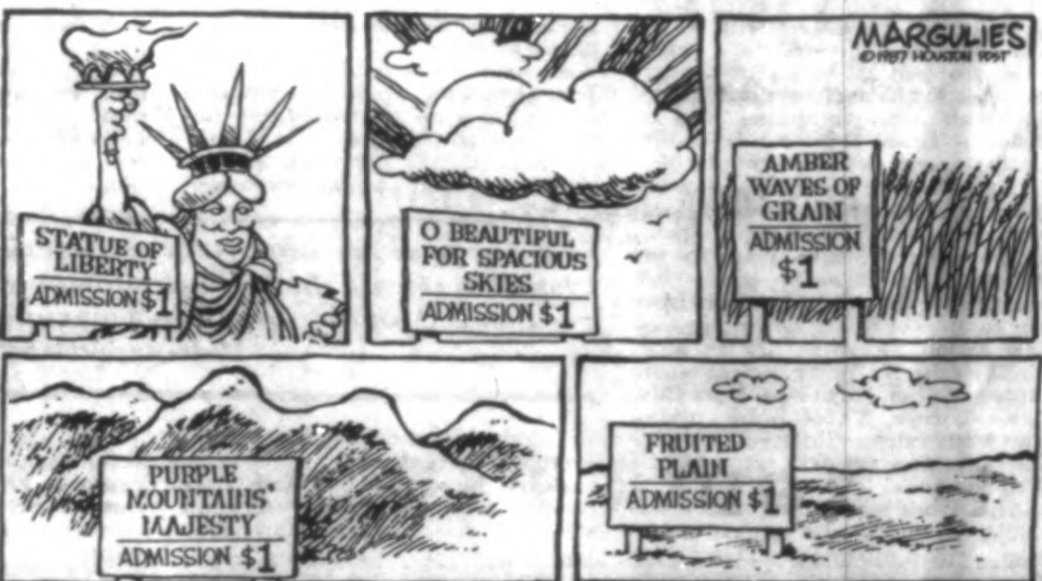
user's thoughts and reactions are not slowed.

Cost also plays a large role in the popularity of Ecstasy. The cost of one hit is equivalent to the cost of an average night on the town for most people. It's not as expensive as cocaine but provides essentially the same effects.

Third is the image of the drug. Ecstasy is a designer drug, a name that sounds young, new, exciting and definitely not lower class. Ecstasy can be associated with young business people and college students — people who are successful and people who plan to be successful. It doesn't carry the stigma of heroin — the junkie's drug — or crack — the street drug.

Whatever the reason for the popularity of Ecstasy, it isn't a good one. The drug was dangerous enough to merit an emergency ban from the DEA a year and a half ago. That action should be enough of a warning for anyone to steer clear of Ecstasy, especially anyone intelligent enough to attend an institution of higher learning.

Paula Vogrin is a senior journalism major and a columnist for The Battalion.



## Mail Call

### Stop and think

EDITOR:

In response to the Feb. 5 letter of Mark Heath and Don Hermon: I think Silver Taps is the most solemn and worthwhile tradition at A&M. But it is absolutely ridiculous to have Easterwood Airport stop flight traffic during this time. In fact, as a friend pointed out to me, the disturbances symbolize that life goes on! Silver Taps is a beautiful ceremony, but people die all the time — and trains still roll, and planes still fly!

Richard Fox  
Graduate student



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