

# Opinion

## The Battalion

(USPS 045 360)

Member of  
Texas Press Association  
Southwest Journalism Conference

### The Battalion Editorial Board

Loren Steffy, Editor  
Marybeth Rohsner, Managing Editor  
Mike Sullivan, Opinion Page Editor  
Jens Koepke, City Editor  
Jeanne Isenberg, Sue Krenk, News Editors  
Homer Jacobs, Sports Editor  
Tom Ownbey, Photo 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, Department of Journalism, Texas A&M University, College Station, TX 77843-4111.

Second class postage paid at College Station, TX 77843.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to The Battalion, Department of Journalism, Texas A&M University, College Station TX 77843-4111.

## Drinker takes all

With the withdrawal of its earlier "dramshop liability" decision, the Texas Supreme Court has returned drunken driving laws to the realm of common sense and shifted responsibility for intoxication from the server back to the drinker, where it belongs.

The court announced Wednesday that it was withdrawing its previous decision to let stand an appeals court ruling holding an El Chico restaurant liable for the 1983 Houston traffic death of a driver who had been to happy hour.

The dramshop liability is also a taxpayer liability. It opens a hornets' nest of potential lawsuits in an already litigious society. Other cases would have to determine the extent of a server's responsibility to drinkers. It also allows drunken drivers to blame bars and restaurants for the drivers' irresponsible actions.

Bar owners do have a duty to motorists, as well as to their customers, to not allow intoxicated drivers on the road. But this does not justify holding bartenders responsible for actions taken by patrons after they leave the establishment. A bartender or waiter has few means of detaining a drunken customer aside from uttering the cliché, "I think you've had enough."

How can a bartender be absolutely certain customers are not intoxicated before serving them a drink? Waiters do not have legal authorization to detain customers against their will, even if they show signs of inebriation.

True, the National Alcoholic Beverage Control Association says that 41 other states have laws that place liability on commercial servers of alcohol. But as we've said before, a bad law, whether in one state or 41, is still a bad law.

When it comes to alcohol-related legislation, Texas never has been quick to mimic other states. Texas legislators stubbornly refuse to enact an open container law, despite the example of other states, not to mention the dictates of common sense.

Bartenders should not place profits above human decency by encouraging already intoxicated customers to purchase more drinks. They should exercise concern for customers and try not to let them leave if they show signs of intoxication.

But at the same time, it is the customers who are doing the drinking. They must accept the consequences of their weakness. The message should be clear — think before you drink.

The dramshop ruling needs to be abandoned. Although it rarely takes such action, the Supreme Court was right to withdraw its earlier decision. We must not become so intoxicated by the anti-drunken driving crusade that we support unfair rulings.

The dramshop ruling had a sobering effect. The court should learn from past mistakes and not attempt to re-create October's fiasco. It time to stop offering irresponsible drinkers — especially those who drink and drive — undue credit. It's time to stop making bar and restaurant owners pick up the tab for customers' actions.

## A hot summer day in America's past

Back when my only goal in life was to be tall enough to see over the kitchen counter, things were clearly defined.

**Carol Rust**  
Guest Columnist

Good. Bad. Hot. Cold. Yes. No. Shreveport was a sleepy little cowtown back then, mired in red dirt, talk of cotton prices, the leathery smells of saddles in the hardware store and Augusts that dragged by more slowly than a pregnant hog.

There were good, honest, Christian men who worked and sweated hard for a living and sang "How Great Thou Art" in church on Sundays. Those were the white men. The black men, even though most worked and sweated hard for a living, too, and went to church and had kids and everything that the white men did, didn't get quite the same credit. They were the lazy, shiftless sort you couldn't trust to do anything but not show up for work. That's what folks said, anyway.

That was one more designation of my youth, and perhaps the most obvious: black and white. There were black and white waiting rooms at the doctor's office, black and white water fountains, black and white schools, black and white churches. There would have been black and white swimming pools, but the city didn't waste time building pools for Negroes, using the polite term. They'd tear up the pool in a year or two, you know how they are. That's what folks said, anyway.

Well, I didn't think much of it, because that's the world everybody else lived in back when I was five or so years old. Another part of my world as the first-born child of a veterinarian was the

official title of gate-opener down at the pasture when Dad was on call.

The phone call one Saturday morning couldn't have come at a more unfortunate time, because Tom was just fixing to knock Jerry to kingdom come and Bugs Bunny was coming on right after that. And some stupid cow somewhere was sick and I was going to miss it all.

I reluctantly got ready to go, dreading Dad's dusty truck that didn't have a proper place to sit and smelled so much like animal medicine that pretty soon you started tasting it, too. We bounced along, almost clear to Mansfield, and I was mighty happy by then to get out and open the gate when we finally did get there.

The colored man who kept the land for whoever owned it came up to Daddy's side of the truck and pointed way out to the pasture. I'm not sure what he said, but whatever it was, it made Dad think twice about taking me with him.

So he pointed me to the colored man's front yard right up next to the road, where a little black girl was playing, and told me to stay there and play with her. You could have knocked me down with a feather. Not that Daddy ever told me to stay away from colored people, but he didn't exactly encourage it, either. And here I was supposed to play with one.

I walked in the yard, not knowing what to say to this girl about my age who was so very black. I couldn't say much anyway because my tongue was just about stuck to the roof of my mouth, dry and all medicinal-tasting, from the long ride down. She was hopping around, making little clouds of dust in the grassless yard with her feet, and holding the most delicious-looking,

half-eaten purple Popsicle in the world. I guess my eyes stuck to that purple Popsicle about like my tongue was stuck to the roof of my mouth.

"Hey," she said.  
"Hey," I said.

Then she lifted the Popsicle up between us and held it there. I stared at it stupidly, and only a minute later did I realize she was offering it to me.

A half-eaten Popsicle. Purple. That a colored girl had already bitten into.

I knew I would drop dead if I took one bite, even a slurp. I might drop dead if I even thought about taking a slurp. And yet I was awful thirsty, maybe the thirstiest I'd ever been in my five years. I took it in my hand.

That was the longest moment of my life. I felt suspended in time as I was drawing that purple Popsicle up to my mouth.

I was fixing to drop dead and go to hell for ever and ever and never see my little brother again.

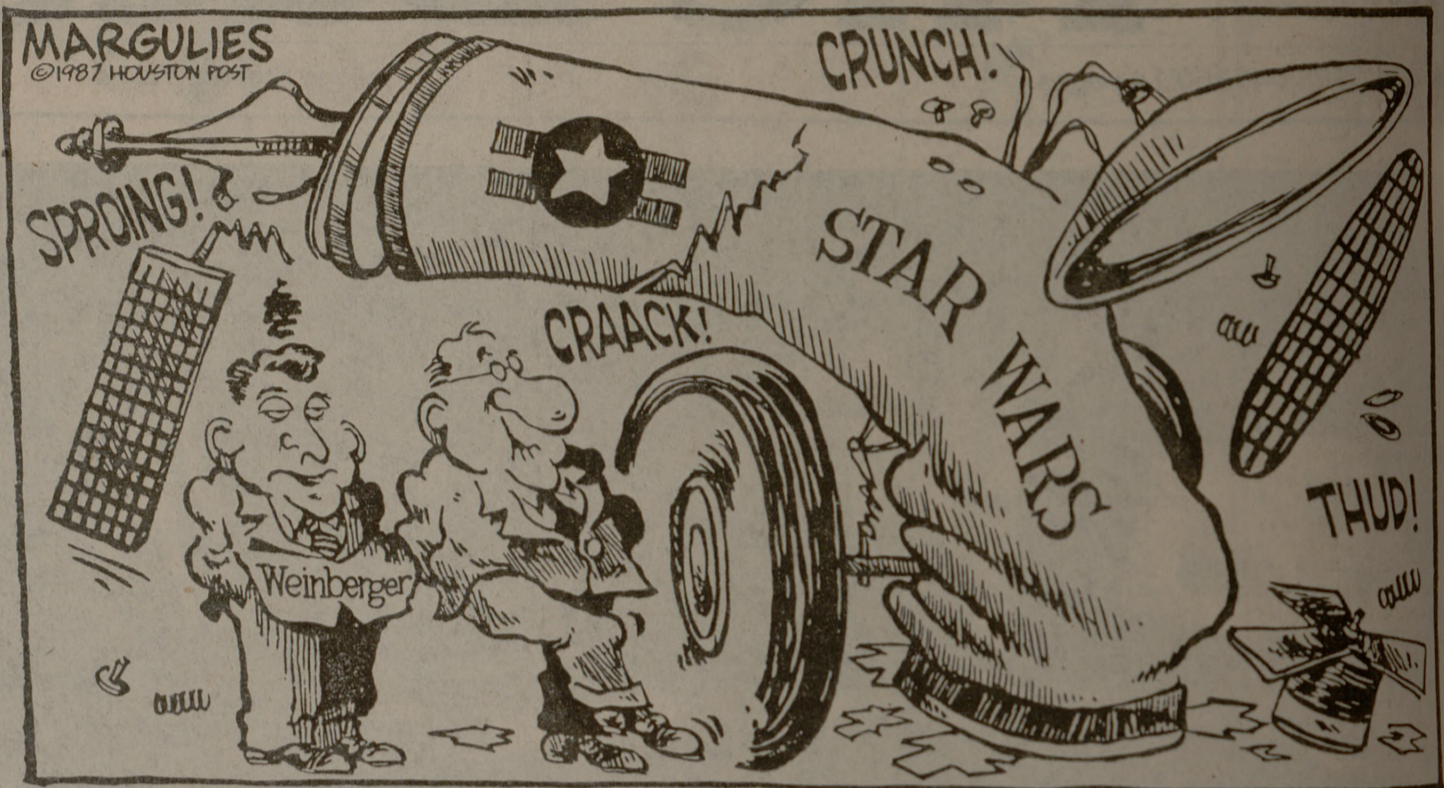
But I took a bite anyway.

All in all, I took two bites and three slurps before I gave it back to her. It was a very good Popsicle. And after that, when I saw all those signs over water fountains and on doors and in conversations saying, "black" and "colored," I thought someone must have tricked a whole bunch of people or something along time back and no one had found out about it yet.

Sure, there's black and white — always has been, always will be.

But there's also purple, the color of the juicy Popsicle a little black girl gave me one hot, Louisiana afternoon when I was thirsty.

Carol Rust writes for the Beaumont Enterprise.



"Uh, Congressman, I'll ask you please not to kick the tires anymore..."

## Feb. 14 can be a heartbreaker

Friday the 13th seems like an appropriate day to write about the holiday for sweethearts.

Long ago, the Romans celebrated Lupercalia as a lovers' festival. Part of the ceremony consisted of putting girls' names in a box and letting the boys draw them out. This supposedly paired off couples for a whole year, until the next Lupercalia. Later, the church attempted to give a Christian meaning to this pagan celebration. Around A.D. 496, the Pope Gelasius changed Lupercalia, held on Feb. 15, to St. Valentine's Day and began celebrating it on Feb. 14.

Some say there were two saints named Valentine — both were martyrs. One was beheaded on Feb. 14, A.D. 270 for refusing to denounce Christianity. According to legend, he left a farewell note for a jailer's little daughter who had befriended him in prison and signed it "from your Valentine."

There also is evidence that Valentine's Day was celebrated in England during the time of Chaucer. Men sent valentines as a way of proposing. The English believed Feb. 14 was the day birds paired, and the holiday remained on this date.

In our society, Feb. 14 is the day of the year when people send valentines to

those they love. The day when men send a pound of chocolate to their sweethearts and then tell them they're fat. The day Charlie Brown runs to the mailbox to search for a card from the little red-haired girl, only to find another Valentine's Day has come and gone and he still can't get a date. It's the day Hallmark plans for, hoping to make a fortune selling mushy love poems on decorative cards.

Despite the commercialization and hype about just another ordinary day, having a valentine remains important to many people. Valentine's Day never really meant much to me until this year, probably because the only valentines I ever got from a male before were from my dad. I don't count the Donald Duck and Goofy valentines I received in second grade. In high school, my Dad joked with me about how I always was in-between boyfriends in February, but I could always count on Dad to remember me on Valentine's Day.

I guess my dad is probably breathing a sigh of relief this year because his daughter, a senior in college, finally got a valentine. Of course, I'll never forget all the years that I didn't have a valentine. It's amazing how one day out of the year can make you feel so rejected, not to mention the blow to your self-esteem and ego when people brag about all the gifts their sweethearts gave them. And of course, there's always some obnoxious bleached-blond with a dozen red roses asking you what you got for Valentine's Day. Funny how the response, "I got a

lovely card from my dad" always is exactly the one she wanted to hear.

On the flip side, there are some people who complain because they don't have a valentine, but don't want to spend any money on them. Couples seem to break up for no apparent reason just before Valentine's Day and patch things up right after the stores remove their Valentine merchandise. Other people escape town, if possible, and spend the day with a friend who also is boycotting the holiday.

Holidays always depress some people because celebrations are supposed to be spent with family and friends. Unfortunately, there are people who spend these days alone, but Valentine's Day

can be an especially cruel holiday for those individuals who desperately want a serious relationship. It serves as a reminder that they still haven't found the right person. For the most self-confident and happy single person can be a little put-off with the inquiries about their love life on Valentine's Day.

It's sad how we promote a day for sweethearts that also seems to humiliate those who don't have one. I guess it's the human nature to want someone to call you own. To bad we don't tell all the people we love and care about how we love them more often, instead of doing it with candy and flowers one day out of the year. Better yet, maybe we could respect the feelings of those who are still looking for a valentine.

Jo Streit is a senior journalism major and a columnist for The Battalion.



Jo Streit



## Mail Call

### Wasting money

EDITOR:

So A&M feels it needs to build a new events center to replace G. Rollie White Coliseum. This new center, which will have double the capacity of G. Rollie, will enable A&M to draw more rock and pop groups and be a larger home for Aggie basketball. I see. Well, I attended two big events at G. Rollie White this week and had little problem with "close quarters." At the Pretenders concert, I had all the room I needed to dance myself silly — a scant crowd of 2,200 showed up! On Sunday, Top 20-ranked TCU came to town and attracted a crowd of barely half capacity. I heard many a TCU fan wonder out loud where all the Aggie fans were. Maybe A&M should take the money it has collected for this new center and use it to get the Financial Aid Office into the 20th century. The only thing that's going to fill a new 15,000 seat arena is a gathering of students waiting for their Guaranteed Student Loan's to come through — or maybe Bruce Springsteen.

Craig Salsgiver, Graduate Student

### Send money

EDITOR:

Congratulations, Karl Pallmeyer! It's nice to finally see you come up with something I agree with. Your article on Oral Roberts was well worth reading. I enjoyed the humor. It might have been a touch sacrilegious, but hopefully God has a sense of humor, too. Thanks again. And by the way, folks, if Pallmeyer needs some disciples to help collect his \$2 million, don't hesitate to call. I plan on being here for a long time, and though I appreciated this particular column, I would still hate to see Karl's curse become my curse, too.

Jay Porter '87

Letters to the editor should not exceed 300 words in length. The editorial staff reserves the right to edit 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.