

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.

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Pageant misses point

At a time when cuts in education spending are threatening scholarship programs, financial aid, minority recruitment and faculty, and when staff salaries, and tuition and service fees are increasing, the prudence of using about \$12,000 in student service fees to fill the Miss Texas A&M beauty pageant budget deficit left over from 1986 is questionable.

Bonne Bejarano, executive director of the pageant, said the \$12,000 shortfall from 1986, resulting from inadequate fund-raising, was absorbed by the Memorial Student Center and the MSC Hospitality Committee, whose budgets are subsidized by student service fees.

In essence, \$12,000, which included prizes and clothes for the final contestants, was given to the pageant, compliments of the students.

While A&M's beauty pageant may be a good time and — after eight years — may also be considered an Aggie tradition, it's not worth taking \$12,000 from students to pay for it.

If the people want the pageant, the people will pay for it. But if money earned from ticket sales, concessions, \$3 programs and donations isn't enough to cover costs, the obvious message is that the pageant isn't something most students care to finance — at least not during hard economic times.

Bejarano said the financial problems of the 1986 pageant were created largely by people who pledged donations but didn't follow through. That doesn't justify digging into students' pockets — that's cause for canceling the pageant.

If A&M continues to take money from financially strapped students for things most enjoyed by the general public, it will have a tough time justifying any service fee increases when the need really arises.

Right to life overrules the right to privacy

Vanity Fair magazine recently ran a two-page spread of pictures of people, mostly New Yorkers, who have died of AIDS. They include some famous persons, and in impact the two-page spread was a bit like the one Life magazine published years ago of men killed in Vietnam. We are engaged in another war.



Richard Cohen

And like Vietnam, this war is highly politicized. Since AIDS first appeared in the United States, the disease has been linked to homosexuality. For that reason, it was almost immediately seized upon by some as evidence of God's wrath. A timid and irresponsible federal government, politically beholden to homosexual haters, followed suit. Its initial funding of AIDS research was niggardly.

But now the politics are coming from the other direction. For understandable reasons, some homosexual groups and their allies in the civil-liberties community continue to see AIDS the way the federal government and its know-nothing allies once did — as mainly a homosexual problem. As a result, they are in the forefront of those who oppose even limited mandatory blood testing and who insist that the results of even voluntary testing be kept either anonymous or confidential.

The results can be downright chilling. Persons who are known to have either the AIDS antibody (meaning that they have a good chance of eventually getting the disease), or who have AIDS itself can keep this information to themselves. Physicians, hospitals and clinics not only keep the information to themselves but, for the most part, are forbidden from alerting others. Thus, there are situations where a husband who has been told he has either AIDS or is infected by the virus does not tell his wife. And neither does anyone else.

For instance, a husband, secretly bisexual, was tested for AIDS and told that he has the antibody. Neither the clinic that performed the test nor the man's own physician could inform the man's wife. She does not know she is in danger, nor would she know — in the event the marriage dissolved or she was having extra-marital affairs — that she

could be spreading the disease to others. Moreover, she would have no reason to suspect that, should she get pregnant, she could infect her children.

There are serious and complicated civil-liberties and public-health concerns involved here. Homosexual groups and their advocates argue that unless testing is kept strictly confidential, persons who suspect they have AIDS will not submit to testing. They ask whether a secret bisexual or a man who visits prostitutes would volunteer for testing knowing that his wife would be given the results.

Disclosure that a person has AIDS is still tantamount to evidence of homosexuality. That could have severe repercussions — loss of a job, loss of housing and even loss of child custody. Besides, your sexual preference is no one's business. We are talking here of the most personal of acts.

But AIDS is no longer only a homosexual concern. It has appeared in the heterosexual community as well and, while the caseload is still small, there is reason to believe that it will grow geometrically in the coming years. (In Africa, AIDS mostly afflicts heterosexuals.) We are all at peril. The understandable concerns of homosexuals and the anxiety of civil libertarians over invasion of privacy have to be weighed against what experts say is the danger: an AIDS epidemic that could claim 179,000 lives by 1991.

Mandatory testing conducted routinely among persons admitted to hospitals or clinics dealing with sexually transmitted disease (or as a marriage requirement) may run the risk of driving AIDS-infected people underground. But those people at least have reason to know they might have the disease. Many others — for instance, the wife of the bisexual man — are blissfully ignorant of the peril they are in. The wife of the secret bisexual has a right to know her situation and so do the people with whom she may have sexual contact. Ignorance may be bliss, but when it comes to AIDS it can be lethal.

Government and the health-services industry have an obligation to find as many AIDS-infected people as they possibly can and then, as sensitively as possible, take steps to ensure that the disease is not spread. Personal privacy is not a trifling matter. Neither are the concerns of the homosexual community. But we all have our civil rights, and foremost among them is life.

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Before SMU gets better, it's going to get worse

Who would have thought the NCAA would actually do it? Not Southern Methodist University — it was expecting cancellation of two or three non-conference football games and some sort of probation from the NCAA Committee on Infractions. Instead, SMU received the harshest punishment in the history of college football — the "death penalty."



Paula Vogrin

The sanctions imposed by the NCAA will alter SMU's football program for perhaps the next decade. To begin with, there is no 1987 football season for SMU — period. In 1988, the Mustangs are allowed to play only seven games, none at home and none against another Southwest Conference team. None of these games may be televised, and SMU cannot make any post-season appearances (as if there could be any post-season appearances for the Mustangs in 1988). Until Aug. 1, 1989, the coaching staff is limited to one head coach and five full-time assistant coaches. No football scholarships can be awarded in the academic year 1987-88, and no more than 15 football scholarships can be awarded in 1988-89. Compare these numbers with the 52 scholarship players at SMU last season. Finally, until Aug. 1, 1988, no off-campus recruiting is allowed.

The NCAA was not overly severe in its treatment of SMU. The school has been on probation six times in the past 12 years for recruiting violations and, even while on probation, continued the activities which got the school there in the first place. While SMU was on probation during the 1985-86 academic

year, 13 football players were paid approximately \$47,000 dollars, and eight student-athletes continued to receive payments totaling \$14,000 from September to December 1986. Something as drastic as the death penalty was necessary to correct the repeated recruiting violations occurring there.

But the sanctions affect more than just the football team. Many people will be unemployed as a result — members of the Mustang coaching staff, some members of the athletic department and stadium personnel.

Other sports at SMU also will be affected. The football program generates about two-thirds of the school's \$6 million dollar athletic budget. Football revenue supports SMU's nationally prominent track and field, swimming, tennis and golf teams. Without funds from football revenue, these teams surely will suffer.

What about the innocent Mustang football players — those who didn't accept any signing bonuses, "party" cash, rent-free apartments or "good-game" payments from boosters? They have a right to be more than a little bitter. Because of actions by some of their teammates and various boosters, the innocent players will have to leave SMU if they want to continue playing football. This encompasses finding a school that will offer them scholarships, moving to that school and becoming accustomed to new coaches, teammates, professors and social surroundings. Is this fair to those players?

SMU will have a difficult time rebuilding its football program. What player wants to play for a school whose team is sure to be a loser for several seasons? And playing for a losing team isn't the only drawback involved for potential players. Since only 15 scholarships will be available in 1988, many walk-ons

will not be able to afford the high cost of attending SMU, which has one of the highest tuitions in the Southwest Conference.

The university itself will suffer. Having its name dragged through the mud with its football program has tarnished SMU's reputation. Potential faculty may be turned away by the "anything for a good football team" attitude held by boosters and some staff at the university. The fact that so much attention is focused on athletics instead of academics may repel many faculty considering teaching positions there.

Some potential students will decide against attending SMU because of the absence of a football team. Although the presence of football shouldn't have anything to do with obtaining a degree, die-hard fans will opt for a university with an active team so they have something to do on Saturday afternoons instead of study.

Finally, what will the boosters do with the thousands of dollars they "donate" to certain members of the football team each year?

Maybe they'll try recruiting academic "bluechips." High school seniors with scores of 1300 or above on the SAT will be flown into Dallas from all over the country. Boosters will treat them to expensive dinners at exclusive restaurants like the Mansion and Ratcliffe's. They offer these academic stars "signing bonuses" like new IBM PCs with every piece of software available on the market. Are scenes like this part of SMU's future? Probably not.

But what better time than now for the SMU boosters to direct their donations to the academic aspects of higher education instead of the athletic ones?

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

Mail Call

Think again

EDITOR:

In response to Paul Svacina's letter, I agree with him. Blacks are just as — or even more — prejudiced as other people, but the prejudice that blacks have does not deny others of their equal rights. The problem arises when one acts on his prejudices. The quotas that Svacina dislikes were set so minorities would get the same chances as the majority. Without these quotas, qualified minorities would never be considered. Sometimes unqualified minorities slip through the system, but most of the time these minorities are the "cream of the crop."

Svacina was wrong when he said "ambition and perspiration is what made America come so far." It also took opening closed, biased, discriminatory minds. The struggle for even a greater change still continues today.

It's not that minorities are being given an unfair advantage; they are only being given a fair chance. My parents taught me to work for what I wanted because nothing in life comes free.

I'm sure when Svacina's parents came to America with \$50, mine were here riding in the back of the bus and drinking from a "black" water fountain.

Cynthia Green '88

Nuclear nohow

EDITOR:

Someday, somewhere on this earth, a nuclear bomb will detonate, taking human lives. Whether it will happen by accident or on purpose, I don't know. If we are lucky, only one will explode. If we're not so lucky, multiple strikes will destroy major cities and produce catastrophic aftereffects.

How do I know this will happen? Because even if by some miracle all present warheads were deactivated and disassembled, the knowledge of their existence and production will remain. The world cannot simply forget the battering ram, the catapult, the bow and arrow, the gun, or the nuclear missile. Someday, somewhere, a country or the stereotypical mad scientist would recreate a bomb and threaten to use it against others.

The knowledge and technology are with us forever, unless, of course, the human race blows itself into extinction. I would like to see some discussion on what can be done to cope with this reality.

David Christenson '85

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