

Opinion

The time of year when A&M finds it difficult to compete

I'm doomed. I've caught it. The affliction I've been dreading since the first week of school has thrust itself upon my mind and body without mercy. I've contracted the illness that affects college students in epidemic proportions every year. Doctors cannot help the victims, and modern medicine knows no cure.



Paula Vogrin

I'm talking, of course, about Suintanicus Necessarius, better known as Spring Fever.

The Spring Fever virus can flourish only in warm temperatures with plenty of sunshine. It lies dormant over the winter except for occasional instances when it causes visions of beaches, pools, frisbee, and lots of sunshine to fill the heads of unsuspecting college students.

But on the first warm day of the year, the virus becomes active and takes total control of the victim's mind and body.

The symptoms are easily recognizable. If you have Spring Fever, you'll know it. You'll be filled with an uncontrollable urge to be outside. You'll want to feel the sun baking your body, bronzing your skin. You'll have an urge to get active, to do something physical — it doesn't matter whether it's jogging, bicycling, or flying a kite — just so you're doing it outside.

Spring Fever will completely reverse your priorities. Laying out by the pool and going to Duddley's to drink a pitcher or three take the place of going to class, studying for that fast-approaching exam, and doing projects earlier than the night before they are due. You will become completely apathetic about the academic aspects of higher education.

Your attention span will be cut painfully short. If you can force yourself to

attend class, concentrating on the professor's lecture is like having a root canal with no anesthesia. The sounds coming out of the professor's mouth will sound like those made by the schoolteacher in the Charlie Brown cartoon specials — Wah, Wah-Wah, Wah-Wah, Wah, Wah. Your eyes will be glued to the clock and you'll watch the seconds dragging by like so many thousands of years. If, by chance, you're able to muster enough concentration to take notes during class, the pages you write on will inevitably be filled with doodles and drawings of the sun, palm trees, the beach and anything else associated with warm weather. You might as well skip class if you're going to be this worthless.

Your body will not allow you to stay indoors. The physical draw of the pool will be more than you can stand. You will put on your suit and migrate to the pool with the rest of the victims.

No one is safe. If the pool doesn't affect you, the nearest park will. You'll want to swing, ride the merry-go-round,

climb the monkey bars, have a picnic, feed the ducks, play frisbee, toss the softball or kick the soccer ball.

Your metabolism will change. Your desire for heavy, caloric, meat-and-potatoes dishes will diminish. Hibachis will come out of winter hibernation in the storage closet and the aroma of hamburgers, steak and barbecue will waft through apartment complexes everywhere. Concern about the expanded waistline you acquired over the winter will lead you to eat less. Healthy, light foods like salads, fruits and vegetables will be the major elements of your meals.

Your needs for liquid refreshment will increase. You'll have a craving for beer at all hours of the day. A pitcher a day will feed the Spring Fever fire and you will be lost in a world of sun, sport and spirits. These new extended drinking habits will not help you lose your love handles, though.

There is a ray hope for the victims of Spring Fever. During spring break,

those afflicted can do everything they have wanted to do since the onset of the illness and not feel guilty about it. Nothing but a week of total abstinence will cause Spring Fever to go into a temporary remission. After spring break will be possible to attend class and do for your exams 1) because you have ten Spring Fever temporarily over your system and 2) because you have seen the effects of the sickness on midterm grades. But the remission only be temporary. Toward the end of April, Spring Fever will return unbridled furor. It will be harder before to take school seriously when summer or graduation is right around the corner.

So we might as well face it. As warmth and sunshine remain in the forecast for next week, this time doesn't stand a chance until after spring break. Gotta go! The sun is shining, the pool is callin' my name!

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

'Platoon' brings war home

Lon Oakley and I left the movie theater agreeing that "Platoon" is as real as a movie about the grunts in Vietnam is going to get.

Chet Nunley Jr.
Guest Columnist

Lon is a professional soldier. So was I for 20 years. What is depicted in "Platoon" is not the way we would have liked the war to be.

But it is the way it was.

The reality of Vietnam was something that many who served there — especially the 10 percent who fought in the bush as "grunts" — tried to kill and bury when they came back the "the world." Something else that died in Vietnam, for many, was innocence.

Innocence was killed by brutal reality.

That's the overall theme of this movie, I suppose. That larger-than-life truth is played out against a dead accurate background.

Most attempts to deal with the Vietnam experience in movie format have been patently fake.

In "Platoon," I saw reality resurrected.

I went to see the film recently with Lon, an Army officer friend who was a 19-year-old infantry sergeant in the 25th Infantry Division in 1969.

"Platoon" is about the soldiers of that division. It takes place the year before Lon got there.

The opening scene of the movie depicts the arrival of FNGs (new guys) on an airplane, walking out into the blast furnace heat and grit of the country.

The fresh faces, brand new jungle fatigues and baseball caps of the FNGs in instant contrast with the weary faces, hollow stares and weather-beaten fatigues of the bush rats, was all very, very familiar, very real, Lon said.

"Those who were not there are not really going to understand a lot of what happens on the screen . . . but maybe, just maybe, in some small way they can see the nightmare that those of us who were there had to deal with — and then, and even today," he says.

The subliminal messages that permeate the movie, from burning drums of feces behind the outhouse in base camp to the ever-present questions about the number of days left to go "in-country" exchanged by the soldiers, ac-

curately portray the everyday life of the grunt in Vietnam.

It is a draining experience for someone who has been there.

After the movie, Lon said, "There are probably 3,000 to 5,000 guys here at Fort Hood wearing a combat patch, many of them grunts, who will have the same opinion that you and I had — that finally . . . finally, finally, finally . . . from our perspective, here is a believable, this-is-how-it-was movie about Vietnam."

Lon had never really talked to anyone about his experiences, but the movie serves as kind of a catharsis, and after we left the theater, he needed to talk.

"All those things that you and I talked about. The things that you want to put back at the farthest, darkest part of your mind come to life again on the screen," Lon said.

"The scenes of dead U.S. servicemen being loaded into helicopters. It's grotesque; it's not a pretty sight, but it's real.

You see all of that in the movie, and you turn to each other . . . and you're alive . . . and you look at each other and you say 'I'm so thankful to God that I survived.'

"Even today, sitting in my office, when I hear a helicopter take off from the pad behind the building, the very first thought that comes to mind is a memory of lying wounded in a pick-up zone in Vietnam and I knew that whop, whop, whop of the helicopter was for me. I was going home."

The movie brings out all these memories . . . and it can be emotionally bruising if you let it.

It tells the story of the people who fought the war: a lot of minorities, people who were using the military as a step up out of poverty, a lot of people like young 'Chris' who were college students, doing something they thought was patriotic because their dad had done it or (for) whatever else.

"I always knew how many days I had left in Vietnam from the day I got there," Lon said. "I kept a small calendar in my billfold. Kept it waterproofed. Each day, I hacked off a day on that calendar."

I knew that I was going to get my ultimate reward when the calendar was completed. And that reward was my life."

If you are a Vietnam veteran, especially of the infantry, go see the movie.

But don't go alone. See it with another veteran if possible.

You may leave the theater — as we did — a little bit numb. But you will have someone with whom to share — as we did — an old thought:

"Why did I live? Why didn't they?"

Chet Nunley Jr. writes for the Killeen Daily Herald.



Mail Call

Have no pity

EDITOR:

I would like to address Paula Vogrin's idea of fairness. In her editorial, she feels sorry for the athletes at Southern Methodist University who were innocent bystanders, and are now forced to go elsewhere if they wish to play football again. She fee fair to those players.

Tell me, is it fair to allow a football player into a university with an SAT score of 500 or so and give him a full scholarship instead of a prospective student with an SAT score of 1100?

Hundreds (possibly thousands) of gifted students are turned away from top public universities so these great athletes can play football on scholarships. Vogrin, please do not feel sorry for those "innocent" players. First of all, I'm sure they all knew exactly what was going on around them. Secondly, I'm sure that they will all be well taken care of.

And the potential student who will shy away from SMU because of a lack of a football team? Really, do you honestly believe that a prospective student would shy away from any university, simply for something to do on a Saturday afternoon? These students you refer to can afford to go elsewhere for love of a football team.

The NCAA decided to make an example of the SMU Athletic Department. It would be ignorant to assume that this is the only school in which these practices are in use. So, Vogrin, please do not pity someone who has been given a free ride through college. Pity those "innocent" students who are forced to go elsewhere because there was no room for them.

Matt Flanagan '90

Editor's note: The NCAA requires college athletes to score at least a 700 on the Scholastic Aptitude Test.

Nice car, Dude

EDITOR:

This letter is to the owner of that pseudo-vehicle parked in the Commons red lot. Anybody who has ever tried to park in that vast wasteland knows what we're talking about. It's that rusted out piece of metal that used to be a white pick-up truck.

We realize that there is a valid parking sticker on it. However, for the last semester and a half, it has taken up the same two spaces without ever moving. It can't move, as it has two flat tires. Quite recently, the hood has been left open and the engine disassembled. Even that "modern art" on campus is more appealing. Every time one of us has to spend fifteen minutes looking for a parking spot we

think very nasty thoughts of you.

Perhaps the University Police Department could cart this monstrosity off, sell it for scrap, and use the funds to repair the potholes in the Commons lot.

This truck ain't running on Hwy. 6 either way.

Jim Orr '89
Gary Engstrom '87

Forced generosity

EDITOR:

I am normally a very quiet, well-mannered graduate student who stays relatively far from the screaming masses and uproar of the Texas A&M students whose problems and complaints always seem to creep near "world" status. However, I will, in my own reserved manner, respond to the matters raised by *The Battalion's* March 2 editorial concerning the recent "Miss TAMU Beauty Pageant."

I thought I was at this University, as a paying student of course, to heighten my intellectual status by means of superior faculty and excellent educational programs. Wrongo, Mary Lou! I now realize that the faculty and programs to which I have clung so tightly simply pale in comparison to something of much higher status, of much higher intellectual value, of much higher cost.

Ahem . . . Please excuse me for rendering such an outburst. I commend Miss Fritz for her outstanding scholarship as well as for being a very attractive member of A&M's student body. She obviously is well-deserving. But of what?

I say yes to the \$1,000 academic scholarship — but in times of severe economic distress in which this and other Texas universities are definitely involved, could we please take another look at the rest of the pageant winner's prizes? Give me a break, but I did not realize the full educational values inherent in a \$1,000 wardrobe, a diamond pendant and a membership to one of Bryan-College Station's finest tanning spas!

I hope the pageant officials, contestants, and onlookers appreciated the monetary donation in the form of "service fees" for which many of us (students, I mean) should feel proudly responsible!

I know, I know . . . Highway 6 runs both ways.

Leslie A. Sogandares, graduate student

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.

Because several members of the *The Battalion* editorial board will be attending the Columbia Scholastic Press Association Conference in New York City from March 11-14, some of the columns this week will not appear on their regular days.

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.

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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