

Opinion

It's much better than bathing like an Egyptian

Every morning it's the same old thing. I get up, brush my teeth, take a shower, dry my hair, curl my hair, put on a little makeup, apply a dab of perfume, brush my teeth again, and leave for class or wherever else I might be going. The whole process, if you don't count the minutes that pass every time I hit the snooze button, takes about 45 to 50 minutes.



Paula Vogrin

And every morning while I'm making myself presentable, I think how much longer I could have stayed in bed if I didn't have to dry my hair, or curl my hair, or put on any makeup. Even 30 extra minutes of sack time is precious. You don't realize what a difference those 30 minutes can make in erasing shadows under your eyes, curing a hangover or improving your disposition, until you go without them.

But, I guess as a "modern day woman" I should be thankful. My personal hygiene routine is nothing compared to that of women in ancient Egypt, ancient Greece, the Middle Ages, the Elizabethan age, the Victorian age, the Renaissance or the early American West. If I'd lived during any of these eras, my daily routine would be vastly different.

I take daily showers for granted, and I can't imagine one without soap and water. But throughout history, many people couldn't imagine a bath with soap and water. Mare's milk, donkey's milk, red wine, butter and oil were common bathing fluids. During the 1500s, a Polish noblewoman, Countess Elizabeth Bathory, bathed in human blood. It's said she had more than 600 peasant girls killed for her baths.

Other people solved the bathing problem by skipping it completely. During the 1600s, it was believed that frequent bathing led to winter colds and summer sunburn, and was, therefore, hazardous any time of the year. King Louis XIV of France bathed once a year, even then unwillingly.

Needless to say, in societies where bathing was unpopular, body odor was a common problem, and perfumes and sweet-smelling oils became the answer. Although ancient Egyptians bathed occasionally, more often than not, they cured offensive body odors with fragrant ointments made from the ingredients of modern day castor oil.

Bathing wasn't always considered unhealthy, though. In the early American West it was considered a luxury. The shortage of water meant baths were few and far between. When water was available, a whole family would use the same tub of water for their baths.

Thank heaven for modern-day plumbing.

My daily makeup routine is far from complicated. A little bit of eyeshadow, mascara and a touch of blush are the only foreign substances on my face. I've never been one to wear much makeup — I like the natural look better.

I might have made a good Neanderthal woman. The cosmetics they used were natural — red clay, brown mud, yellow arsenic and different hues of plant juices. As a Neanderthal woman, the way I applied my clay, mud, arsenic and plant juices would have told Neanderthal men whether I was a swinging single or a happy housewife, among other things such as my age and the tribe I belonged to. To curl my Neanderthal tresses, I would have rolled my hair on sticks and animal bones.

Starting in ancient Egypt, both sexes used white lead powder on their faces, and black khol around their eyes. Egyptians used henna to enhance their hair, and Cleopatra, that Egyptian fashion mogul, kept her hair straight by sleeping with an iron band around her head and weights attached to her hair. She must not have slept well very often.

White facial powder made from lead continued to be a fashion trend for 2000 years. Not until the 19th century did women begin to see the hazards associated with its use. Not only did it destroy complexions, white lead caused facial tremors and sometimes resulted in

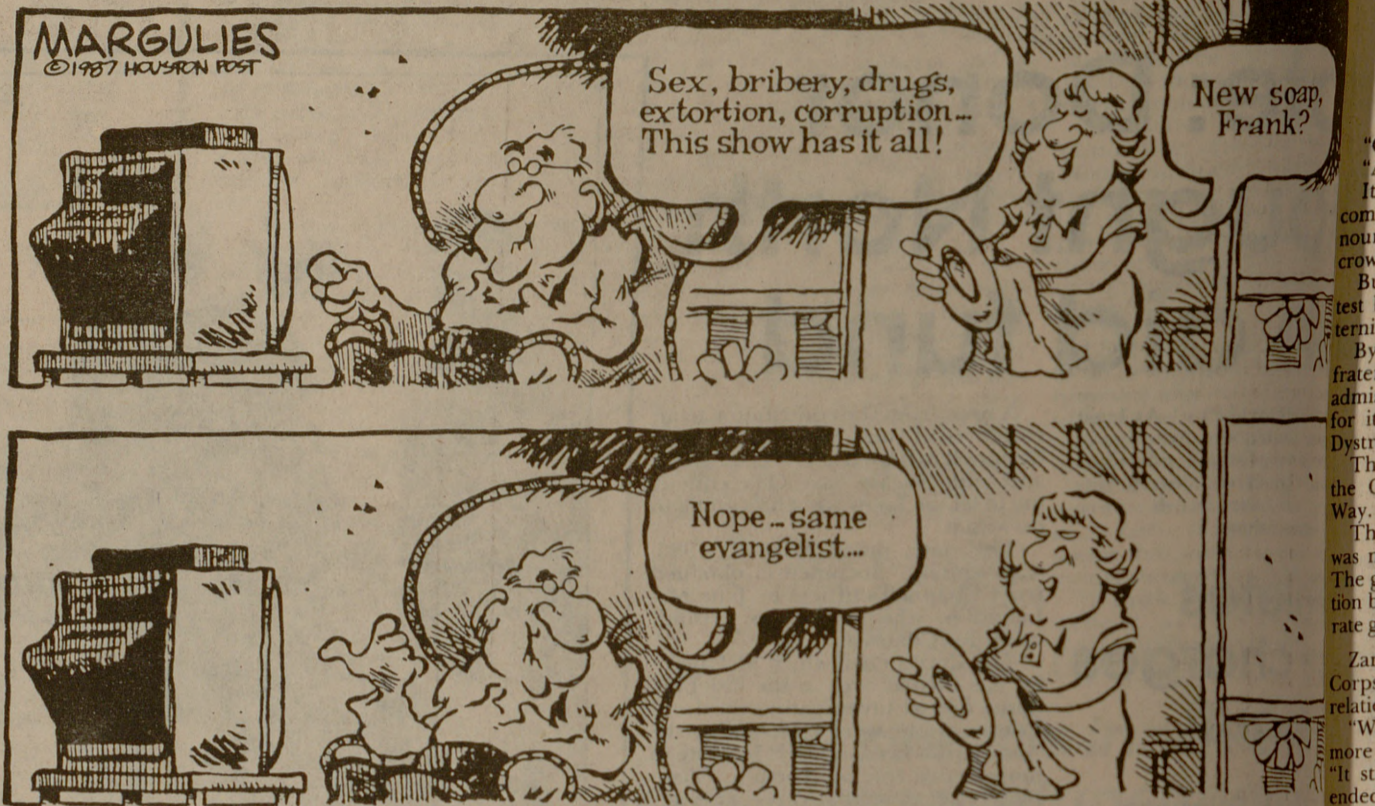
facial muscle paralysis. As early as the 1700s, the white lead powder was considered dangerous, but not until the late 1800s did facial powder made with zinc oxide (the white stuff you wear on your nose in the summer) finally replace the hazardous stuff made with lead.

While makeup gradually became healthier, hair styles became unhealthy. Louis XIII of France started wearing a wig to hide his balding head, and soon men and women alike did the same, whether they were balding or not. To

keep wigs fresh, they were powdered with concoctions made mostly of lead. People eventually began powdering their own hair and scalps to keep it fresh as well. Unfortunately, this practice backfired. So much floury powder attracted lice, and anyone who wore a wig was a victim of infestation.

I guess I don't have too much to complain about after all.

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



For all the viewing public, Reagan's show must go on

On the streets of Washington, you can pose with a life-sized cutout of Ronald Reagan. As in life, the president looks terrific, smiles amiably and stands where he is told. With just a few technological adjustments, the cardboard Reagan could hold a news conference.



Richard Cohen

The real Reagan recently has and we are busily engaged in analyzing it. Did he perform well? Did he perform poorly? The word "performance" was employed time and time again, almost never in a pejorative fashion. But for Reagan, more than any other president, a news conference is that and almost nothing more.

A "generally good performance," said Democratic Sen. George Mitchell of Maine. "As a Republican," said former senator John Tower (Texas), "I was delighted with his performance." Sen. Bob Dole (R-Kan.) was so excited he forgot to say anything about performance, but based his evaluation on it: "The bottom line is the president is in charge."

When are we going to learn that with Reagan a news conference or a speech is irrelevant to performance? A generation of journalists, raised in awe of John Kennedy's wit or Jimmy Carter's mastery of detail, still sees the presidential news conference as reflecting presidential ability. It is often compared to the question period in the British House of Commons when the Prime Minister and Cabinet members answer for their actions. The assumption is that they know what their government is doing and can be held accountable.

No such assumption can be made with Reagan. Historians in the future will surely scratch their heads when they discover it took almost a week to ready a president for questions about his own presidency. They will note with dismay that he had to take briefing books with him to Camp David, that he was twice rehearsed in the White House theater — that, in essence, the White House took time out, like a student before final exams, while the president boned up on

the presidency.

Even so, Reagan seemed confused about why he sent arms to Iran. As he has before, the president said he responded to signals from Iranians who wanted to establish contact with the United States. But, at the same time, he dwelled on the plight of the hostages. "We weren't going to overlook an opportunity if we could get those hostages back," he said.

But the Tower commission concluded that it was the hostages, not an opening toward Iran, that had primacy for the president. In this, the testimony of former White House national security adviser Robert C. McFarlane was critical. "It is very clear that Reagan's concerns were for the return of the hostages," McFarlane said last November while in the Bethesda Naval Hospital.

Again, Reagan was less than credible in explaining why at his last news conference he denied that a third country — Israel — was involved in the arms deal. He attributed his denial to a "misstatement." But it could hardly have been that. According to one source, Reagan in fact did make a mistake — sort of. He had been prepped to deny a report that a Danish ship had been used to transport arms to Iran. When the well-rehearsed Reagan heard the "third party" cue, he recited the right answer to the wrong question. That, as they say, is show biz.

Reagan's last news conference was held a distant four months ago. That one was billed as maybe the most important of his career. Then came a speech to the nation — again billed as supremely important. The State of the Union was accorded the same bated-breath buildup and so was the speech following publication of the Tower commission report. Each performance was reviewed as if it were a show. With Reagan, we all sit on the aisle — critics of the only performance we can see.

But the performance that takes place daily, the one having to do with competence, is invisible to us all. That is the one that counts the most — the one that has been called "disengaged" or, in the business-school lingo of the Tower commission, a peculiar "management style." For that, it hardly matters that Reagan is personable. What ultimately matters is

how he executes his office, and only some of that has to do with appearances.

It will be no excuse to our children, saddled with our elephantine debt, that the president who caused it was terrific

on television. It hardly matters to us now that when Reagan was wonderfully telegenic last year, he was secretly selling arms to Iran. We can hardly tell the victims of a fruitless war in Nicaragua

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Mail Call

Is it justified?

EDITOR:

So the "official" reason seniors should take finals has finally surfaced. It is so we can be a "world-class" university. If there is one thing I hate more than using "it's a tradition" as a justification, it's using "so we can become a world-class university." I guess with seniors taking finals and our great bell tower, we are indeed well on our way to being a world-class university. Our illustrious Association of Former Students' center is even almost completed. I'm not really sure if anyone can say exactly when we will have arrived at world class status. But, I do know we will be headed in the right direction when other universities have a shuttle bus to our library.

Staci Hampton '89

Hey, buddy, Highway 6!

EDITOR:

Much hoopla is being made about the Aggie star quarterback Kevin Murray leaving early for a professional football career. One must wonder if graduating from Texas A&M ever entered his mind? Or were his four years here solely for football? For that matter, what percentage of Jackie's players actually graduate with degrees? Is it too much to ask these questions without risking the wrath of this football-crazed campus? Yes, I know about a certain highway.

William Lamb, graduate student

Ray H. Griggs '81

Faith is all you need

EDITOR:

This is a response to the Wednesday *Farmer's Write* column by Frank Lawrence on the subject of scientific creationism. I have no intention of providing a blow-by-blow response to every comment which was made in this column because my words would most likely fall upon deaf ears. I will not discuss the fact that the hypothesis that God created the world and its occupants in six days is barren (for it is untestable) and hence not very scientific. I will not refute Lawrence's nonsensical statement that there is a "formidable set" of physical evidence which supports creationism, nor will I attempt to correct his woeful misunderstanding of the laws of thermodynamics. I will not outline the rich record of evolution which is present in fossils and garnered from genetic studies.

I will say that I am appalled by the fact that Lawrence can remain so ignorant with all the vast resources of a world-class university at his fingertips. We have a College of Geosciences with many paleontologists and stratigraphers, a biology department with geneticists, and physics and chemistry departments with thermodynamicists who research and teach about the fossil

record and the nature and causes of evolution, but Lawrence has apparently not seen fit to tap their wisdom.

More important, I am appalled by Lawrence's lack of faith in his own God. Lawrence, if you believe that God created the Earth and its inhabitants in six days, why do you need scientific proof? Faith is all that is necessary.

Jim Mazzulo, associate professor of geology

A compromise?

EDITOR:

I followed Aggie football recruiting with my usual intensity and interest this spring. And like most Aggies, I was excited to read about the "best in nation" group of "outstanding athletes" that Jackie Sherrill recruited. My perpetual optimism has been boosted further, and I see a reason that we shouldn't make it three Cotton Bowls in a row!

However, I think we should win our football games without the use of players like running-back-recruit Darren Lewis. It is ridiculous for Texas A&M to recruit players who cannot achieve an SAT score within 200 points of the already-easy NCAA requirements. Can a student with a 490 SAT score make it through freshman English? Is it proper to even let him enroll in school with a total SAT score less than half the student body average? I don't think so.

Sherrill has done tremendous things for A&M since he arrived. We have won football games. He has put more "athlete" in the student body through the Twelfth Man. I hear about mandatory class attendance for football players and read about their 60 percent graduation rates. These are all impressive and worthwhile achievements, but to make glaring exceptions to our supposed high standards by recruiting athletes so clearly sub-par in their academic abilities can only be because the priority of obtaining a top athlete was higher than the priority of obtaining a "real" student. Does Sherrill think that since 40 percent won't graduate that he may as well get the best non-graduating athlete he can?

It is clear with the Southern Methodist University scandal that priorities were not or are not correct at other schools. I love Aggie football and living in Austin, especially appreciate our recent success over the University of Texas. But it is embarrassing and disappointing to discover that A&M is making obvious compromises in its standards to recruit top athletes. I suggest that A&M restate and re-emphasize its commitment to excellence in all areas and not accept serious deficiencies in the quality of its students in the pursuit of football victories.

Dan Hoffmann '80

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The Battalion

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