

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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No cause for dying

America's obsession with physical beauty manifests itself in strange ways — sometimes deadly ways as in the case of Houstonian Patsy Howell.

Seeking to trim down her 5-foot-1-inch, 120-pound frame before her family vacation, the 39-year-old mother of two decided to undergo suction-assisted lipectomy, a surgical procedure to remove fat deposits by suction.

Unfortunately, the medical world can't always be relied upon for sound advice, and the surgery killed Howell. Her death was a tragedy, but the events leading up to her death transcend the definition of tragedy.

The judgmental stares, whistles and comments directed mostly at the women of our society win more business for companies selling weight-loss products, tanning services and cosmetics than advertisers could ever hope to achieve.

There's a mentality among men and women in our society as is reflected in our TV programs, advertising and daily conversation that not only encourages women to strive for Sex-Goddess status, but condemns them for not doing so.

And the mentality is not lost on the Texas A&M campus.

Each semester, *The Battalion* receives letters from concerned students — with the bulk of them coming in the spring — about harassment of young women, overweight or not.

Speaking up and defending an individual against the verbal abuse of others has nothing to do with chivalry, but it has everything to do with courage and compassion. Hopefully, those values haven't been completely replaced by the mentality that caused Howell's death.

After all, beauty is supposed to be only skin deep, but the callousness of others can cut all the way to the bone.

Passing the buck American style

If the Reagan Revolution was erected on a tripod of morality, ideology and benign greed, then bad news has certainly come in threes. First came the insider-trading scandal, then the one about selling arms to Iran and now the admission by the evangelist Jim Bakker that he had a wee sexual interlude with a church worker: Greedgate, Irangate and Godgate — as usual, money is missing.



Richard Cohen

Of them all, Godgate is certainly the most alluring if only because it involves sex. Bakker, a minister with a TV parish numbering in the millions, has resigned as the head of the PTL (Praise the Lord) Club and turned things over to the Rev. Jerry Falwell. He admits to having paid \$115,000 in blackmail to keep his tryst quiet and attributes his public shaming to an attempt by someone to mount a hostile takeover of his ministry.

As with the other scandals, this one begs for the appointment of an investigatory commission or a special prosecutor. (John Tower, where are you when we need you?) There are many questions to be answered: How does anyone launch a hostile takeover of a ministry in which no shares are traded? Why didn't Bakker simply deny his 15-minute "sexual interlude" and tell his quarter-hour Delilah to go fly a kite? Were there, possibly, other 15-minute interludes, so many of them that maybe over the last decade Bakker has spent a total of three and one-half hours in illicit sex?

When it comes to Bakker, two emotions collide. The first is scorn. His incessant fund-raising, his hyper-hypocrisy and his rigid orthodoxy are hardly to be admired. He is a salesman of salvation, a religious rainmaker who sold the unattainable to the gullible but attained a Palm Springs house for himself. He preached what he himself could not practice. His wife was addicted to prescription drugs, he had succumbed to lust and yet on countless TV sets he bubbled a message that was beyond his own reach.

But the second emotion is compassion. Bakker and his flock, indeed many of the evangelical ministers, are like rigid buildings in a high wind. They have no give and so they snap. It is al-

ways an all or nothing proposition for them — sin or virtue. They acknowledge only the either/or of life, not its countering relativity. That makes their plight only worse. For instance, Bakker attributes his sexual dalliance not to lust, but to an attempt to make his wife jealous — an adultery to promote a better marriage. Believe him if you will, and then call me for a swell deal on the Brooklyn Bridge.

The underlying theme of hypocrisy in the Bakker scandal is a rich vein that should be mined to its fullest. It has the widest application and goes to the heart of what are often called the social issues — the soul of the Reagan Revolution. It's hard to believe that abortion, which they want banned, they would have themselves, if they had to. The homosexuality they condemn as a whimsical perversion they don't connect to the urges that drive them to their own brand of sin. They prescribe traditional values for families buffeted by economic and social forces beyond their control — offering placebos out of the Reader's Digest for the real ailments of contemporary America.

For some, the current scandal amounts to low comedy, a battle for

Peer pressure better than law

Almost everyone has gone out to a bar or club on a Friday night, especially after a rough week, and gotten drunk. This isn't a shocking statement to most people. What is shocking is a number of people who drive themselves home afterward. And despite public outcry from organizations like MADD (Mothers Against Drunk Drivers), extensive coverage by the media on



Jo Streit

the issue and legislative efforts to toughen DWI laws, people continue to drink and drive.

I guess the most frustrating question to answer is why do people drink and drive? It would seem after all the publicity about the dangers of drinking and driving, not to mention the legal responsibilities if arrested for DWI, that people would stop drinking and driving. Apparently, we humans are a little slower than that. Look at all the publicity about the dangers of cigarette smoking. The commercial with the late Yul Brynner who died from lung cancer is enough to make most smokers put out the cigarette they're puffing on. But as soon as the spot is over, they light up another one.

More recent is our nation's campaign against drugs, but will the war on drugs work? How many people do you think have given up drugs because of warnings from Linda Evans, Nancy Reagan and other celebrities? Even rock stars who use to be synonymous with wild times and drug use have appeared on TV to warn against the dangers of drugs.

However, the problem of alcohol abuse is still paramount because alcohol is easily accessible and highly acceptable in our society. Children may never see their parents take drugs, but you can bet most children have seen their parents drink alcohol. These kids may have even seen their parents drunk. It's only natural for children who grow up in an environment where alcohol is acceptable to accept drinking as a normal part of entertaining. Unfortunately, some children learn about alcohol use from an alcoholic parent. In no way am I suggesting we eliminate alcohol, but rather a sincere effort on the part of our society to change the norms associated with alcohol use.

I can remember in high school what a challenge it was to find and consume alcohol. It was standard practice for many students to get drunk before the football game or any other social occasion. Getting drunk was something to brag about. Raising the drinking age isn't the

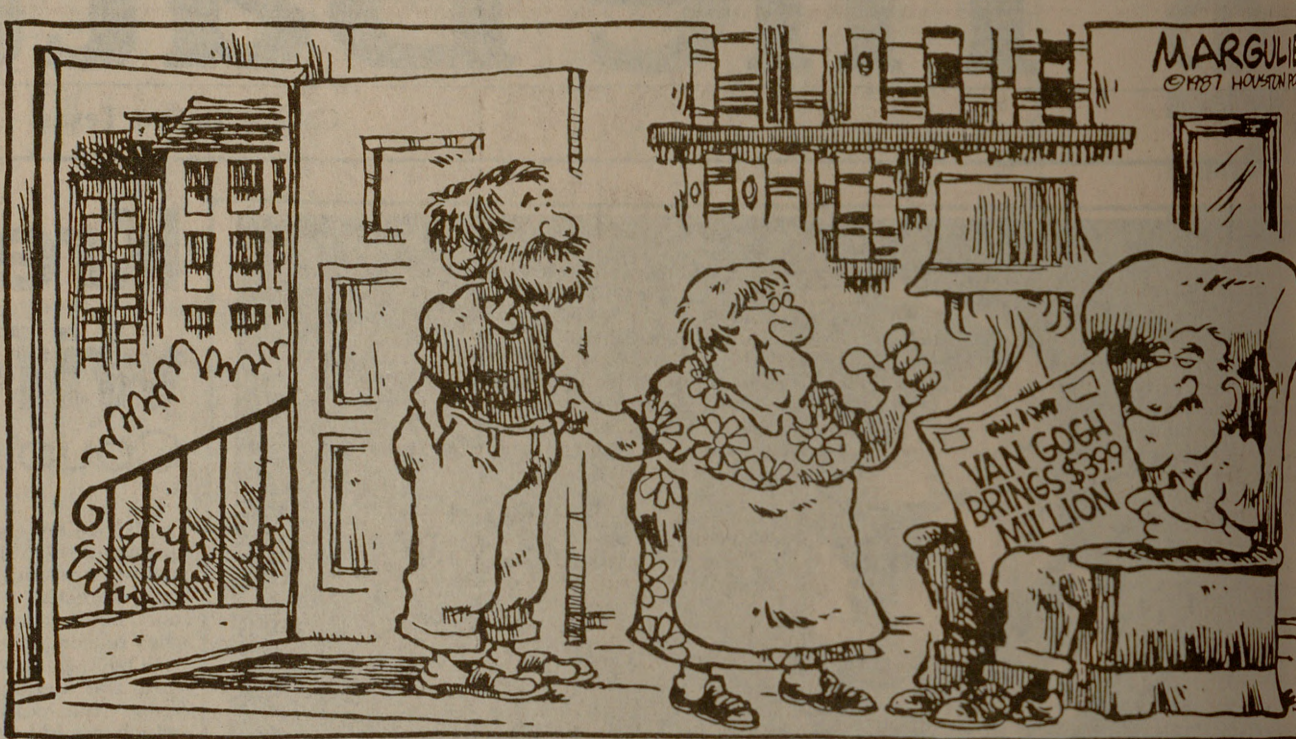
way to solve the problems associated with alcohol abuse. If high school students can get alcohol, you better bet 18- to 20-year olds are even more resourceful. Fake identification cards are commonplace for underage people.

Instead of telling young adults they're not old enough to drink and we should educate them at an early age to be responsible. In many European countries, children are constantly surrounded by alcohol, especially at meals. But instead of being a universal taboo, alcohol is treated with the solemnity of bread. Children often decide drinking alcohol as a decision that must be met with responsible behavior. When I went to Spain, none of the Spaniards I met would even consider getting drunk at a bar or club they were driving.

Of course, state legislators still have the problem of trying to prevent drunk driving. Another open-container law has won approval in the Senate and is currently under review by the House Quorum Regulations Committee. Despite two previous defeats on similar bills, it appears this time the open-container measure will become law. This law will affect the driver. Passengers will be allowed to consume alcohol in a motor vehicle.

Passage of the open-container law is a logical step in trying to deal with drinking and driving problems. Some legislators feel the law will be enforceable. Others say the law will be ignored by the public, much like the mph-speed-limit law. Whatever the result, it's a step in the right direction because many people will probably choose voluntarily. Even if they don't obey the law, it will be another attempt to make clear how our society views drinking and driving. Maybe adults are too busy with their ways or too stubborn to teach children more often than not respond positively to values deemed important by society. Increased attention and direct honest messages about alcohol abuse, alcohol abuse and the dangers of cigarette smoking can only help keep our children safe.

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



"Talk some sense to the boy, Harry... He wants to quit art school and study medicine instead..."

Mail Call

Are you sure you're not really the president of the Texas A&M "Flat Earth Society," Lawrence?
Bob Brene '82

A cut above

I am tired of having the same justification for just about every project undertaken at A&M these days. Namely, that we are trying to become a "world class" university. What bothers me about the use of this vague, catch-all term is that it seems to suggest that if we try hard enough and are lucky, maybe someday Texas A&M will rank right up there with the great universities of the world.

Well, I've got news for those who (most of whom never attended A&M as students) casually throw that term around. No matter how many bell towers we build or how many high-dollar profs we hire (or lose), A&M is and will always be in a class by itself. A cut above the rest. Gig'em Aggies!

Joseph P. Newton '81

Flat world?

EDITOR:

This is yet another response to the March 25 column in *Farmers Write* by Frank Lawrence entitled "Creationism is as scientific as evolution." I say this because I sincerely hope many letters have and will be published to correct the unequalled gush of nonsense Lawrence unleashed on the Opinion Page.

To outline the torrent, lots of people misinterpret the laws of thermodynamics. It's OK Lawrence, you're not alone. Many folks also know how to spell DNA and genetics, and that's about the extent of their knowledge on the subject. So all right, you didn't do well in Geology, lots of people find it very difficult. And, Lawrence, I didn't expect you to know about the detailed evolution of horses known from the fossil record, just one example drawn from many. Nor did I expect you to know anything about the fact that entomologists and botanists, among others, have witnessed speciation, where one species becomes two reproductively isolated species, a basic tenet of evolution. Let's not even consider what you frothed about astronomy, Lawrence. All this is easily forgiven. You just need a few more years of reading, learning and thinking. No problem.

What's not so easy to pass over, Lawrence, is your putting two mutually exclusive words together in the same sentence. Every time someone does this, it's the equivalent of their putting on a clown suit and running about in populated areas waving a huge red flag while shouting "The moon is green cheese. The moon is green cheese!" into a megaphone. Those words Lawrence, in case you haven't guessed, are "scientific" and "creationism." Creationism is in no way related to science and vice versa.

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