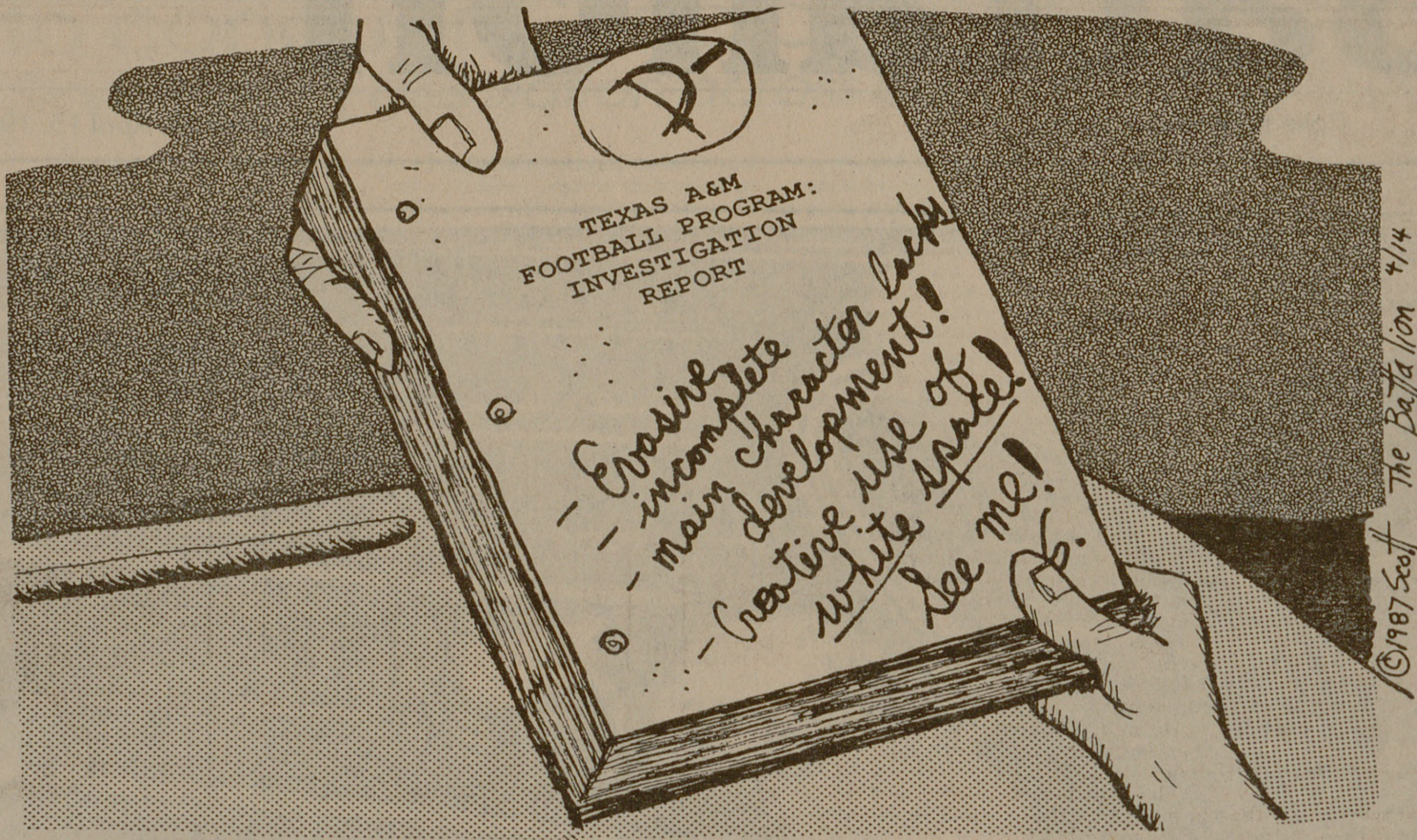


Opinion



Step right up and fit right in



Mike Sullivan

A professor recently asked a class I was in what, if any, issue might move students enough to protest. There was no response. Nothing in this day of short hair and polo shirts ranks high enough on the priority lists of American — or at least Texas A&M — college students to organize and demonstrate.

I told the professor that I didn't think there was anything happening in the world, this nation or on A&M's campus that could motivate students to protest.

No one protested my comment.

Of course, I'm not talking about real issues like students walking on the Memorial Student Center lawn or the University of Texas stealing Reveille. We'd all jump to our feet for issues like that.

There are other issues, though — issues that should interest us as college students, but somehow rank right below "Leave it to Beaver" and "Andy Griffith."

For instance, I don't like the governor of this state and his mindless methods, the president and his clandestine crusades or this university's dictator-like attitude. (Who's paying tuition, anyway?) But you won't find me organizing a demonstration. And I won't find you lining up to participate.

One student in the class said that if an issue touched close enough to home, she would protest. If she was being honest, she's unique.

In fact, there's an issue touching this campus even as I write that should motivate at least a small group of students to speak out through organized protest, but I personally guarantee that Aggies will not organize and make themselves heard.

It took three members of the Aggie Mothers Club to finally get some front-page attention for the issue. I'm talking, of course, about the three mothers who wrapped President Vandiver's house with toilet paper Friday night in protest

of the foolish final-exam schedule effective Spring 1988.

So their methods weren't the best. Their intentions were. But it's a good idea for college students to rely on their mothers to take action against issues that should be of most concern to students themselves. Thanks, Mom.

The fact is, students at this University are here for one thing, a degree — license to change the world, but to unlock another door to the system.

College is no longer a place to try ideas, challenge the theories of our teachers or open our minds. There's no room and no place for protesting in the highly organized college system. A school for rote learning, an extension of school is what college has become.

And you can see it all around you every class you attend. Students with out pens trying to copy down the professor's words, pouring from their professor's mouths never lifting their heads from their notebooks to question the reasoning behind those theories.

Rather, the questions students are aimed at getting more information about the theories, so they can do better on the exam, pass the class and, once the process is repeated enough, they graduate — soon to forget.

And as free as we like to believe our country is, we must pay for the right to be accepted by the system. Consider the cost of a college education and your prospects if you don't have one. You are educated by the system, your chances for success are limited.

It's really no wonder students protest things within the system. We've become an integral part of a machine that needs no oil. There's a place in society waiting for us after we've finished the line and completed our college education. The challenge of finding a place is minimal. All we have to do is to the campus placement center.

If you feel a general sense of anger for anything other than North Texas summer vacation, A&M — college — where you belong.

Mike Sullivan is a senior journalism major and the Opinion Page editor of The Battalion.

Vietnam — a native's account

The following column is the first of a two part series. The second column will be printed in Thursday's edition.

In the spring each year, when bluebonnets spring forward in a silent night, a sudden sadness, a dark memory, over-shadows my life. The life of a yellow man, a man without a home.

Gong Thanh
Guest Columnist

I used to have a home. It was a small home filled with the love of my family. I used to cry in the arms of my beloved mother each time my sister snatched away my cookies. I used to sleep in my father's arms in those frightening nights when rolling thunder of gunfire broke the silence of the night. My home was in Vietnam.

In Vietnam, especially in my hometown, there was a wild flower colored blue like the Texas bluebonnet. I called it a blueviet. Like a Vietnamese, a blueviet sprang forward suddenly and withered suddenly. Like a blueviet, a Vietnamese's yellow skin has turned blue with hatred — the hatred of fire, of rolling thunder. A person's life in my home was like the color blue. Blue is the color of death.

My best friend's death happened about this time 12 years ago. I remember the day she and I went to pick wild flowers on the other side of the Van Co River. A blueviet spread its beauty, its fragrance at one corner of the path. She rushed quickly over to the flower; I was a few steps behind. A gigantic explosion blew up the beautiful blueviet as she touched the clusters. I fell to the ground. My best friend's arms, my best friend's face, and the innocent blueviet all disappeared in the dust of a worn path.

I had a minor wound on my right calf, but my friend was gone. It was just yesterday that we played hide-and-seek. It was just this morning that we shared cookies. It was just an hour ago that we were angry, mad at one another and fighting over a colored pencil. The teacher punished us by making us kneel down, facing the wall. It was just minutes ago that we made up, forgave each other and walked together hand in hand to find berries, to find the blueviet. There were more bluevets, and there were more wild berries. The bluevets were as blue as ever, the berries sweet as they could be. They were all waiting for me and my best friend to pick. But where did she go? Where did she go?

I went to school the next day, though my parents wanted me to stay home. It was the very first time that I was anxious to go to school. I prayed and prayed that my friend would be there waiting for me to tell her about Bato, my dog. The class was there, so was her table, her empty chair. The teacher taught us a lesson of love. Love your home, love your parents, love your friends. The teacher taught us how to color. Color the picture of a peaceful home with daddy, with mommy, with sisters, with brothers and friends all sitting under the bluest sky by golden fields of rice at harvest. At one corner under a tree, I colored blue, for blueviet. This very pencil — which I fought about with my friend yesterday — had seemed to be the most beautiful blue. Today, however, the color seemed to fade away as I painted my peaceful home . . .

The order of evacuation was made. All people must leave their homes because there would be a major battle of the war. I was too young to understand what war was. All I remember is that I was happy not to go back to school again. To me, school wasn't school without my friend.

I saw no wild flower in front of my homeyard as I sat on my father's lap by the bus window — the bus that would take us away from our home. As it pulled away, I could see the mango tree which was in full bloom this year. A green zucchini's arbor where Bato, my dog, and I used to hide when playing hide-and-seek. A small table was still in place on the front porch of my house, where my father used to play Chinese chess when the sun began to set, where my mother used to sit in her rocking chair patching my sister's shirt. As the bus pulled away, I saw my mother's eyes. I saw the empty school. I saw hill after hill of bluevets, sadly beautiful flowers, and wondered which blueviet would blow up like the one that killed my friend or perhaps hundreds of other friends. The bus slowly took us away.

When the bus pulled back into my hometown a month later, the hills of bluevets were gone. The deep ocean-blue hills had been replaced by black, burning ashes. Only ashes were left. The school where my teacher taught us the lesson of love had collapsed on the destroyed ground. The bus didn't enter our town. Too many passengers, too many places to go before dawn. They let us out at an intersection.

From the intersection we walked on the red road heading home. The same old road that I had walked to school with my friends each day, somehow looked exotic. The trees that used to line the road had burned down. The wind blew violently. The smell of pine trees was overwhelmed by the foul odor of blood, of death. The long road was disturbed by an occasional swirl of dust and dead leaves. The Van Co river was murky and still. A few bodies were silently drifting in the water.

My home was gone. The stump of the mango tree was still there. All that was left of the green zucchini arbor were a few black sticks pointing up toward the sky. A small mound of ashes lying beneath the zucchini sticks once was Bato. My father put his luggage down, walked over to Bato's ashes, held them in his hand and let them fall through his fingers as the wind blew them away, and I began to cry.

Nguyen Gong Thanh is a junior petroleum engineering major.

Mail Call

Think about it — a lot

EDITOR:

I saw your dog today. You know, the one you fell in love with when it was such a cute little puppy. You just had to have it to play with, to cuddle, to care for, to keep you company, and to warn you of intruders. As it grew, it accepted you as its master and benefactor. It depended on you for all its needs and loved you completely in return. To that pup you were "its person!" It's fully grown now and I guess it is not as cute anymore. Maybe keeping it was a chore because you did not teach it to behave as you wanted; it didn't understand what you expected. Did the neighbors complain it was too noisy or that it ran loose and dumped garbage? Maybe you had to move to an apartment that wouldn't allow pets or are leaving college and couldn't take it with you. Certainly you could not bear to have it euthanized. You figured a nice country home would be just what it needed. You dropped it off on a pretty country road and drove off patting yourself on the back for getting it a good home.

I saw your dog today, on a back country road. It was running up the middle of the road stopping every so often to sit and rest a minute, then running again, obviously trying to catch up with your car. It limped a little because its feet were cut and bruised from running on sharp rocks in the road but it kept going. I stopped and called to it, but it was frightened and confused and ran off into the brush and pasture. I had hoped it would be coaxed in by someone, but I really knew how very slim that chance was. Most country people already have four or more dogs (mostly strays) and just can't take in any more. Country dogs often gang up on and chase away newcomers. Many ranchers and farmers will chase or shoot stray dogs to protect their livestock. Some even put out poison and traps for coyotes but hungry, unsuspecting dogs often get caught. Lone dogs are also killed by coyote packs. Strays that live enough become infested with fleas, ticks, mange, diseases and eventually starve to death. Even our death-row murderers don't have to go through that.

I saw your dog again this morning. Its torn and battered body lay along side the highway. How long do you suppose it laid there before it died, looking for you, hoping you would come back and take it home to soothe its hurt? Yes, your dog is gone now, but I still think of him. His memory is still at that intersection in the highway. I only wish you could have followed his journey as I have followed him and so many others like him. Just because we live in the country doesn't mean we can take in all unwanted pets. No one can. We are not responsible for

your dog (or cat). You alone are responsible for that animal and any life you take into your care. You sentenced your faithful pet to that fate. Wouldn't the animal shelter (yes, even euthanasia) have been much more humane? Our county is lucky enough to have a very good animal shelter run by deeply concerned people. They are there to help your pet. Be truly kind to your pet. Try hard to find a good home, but if you can't, then seek help from the animal shelter or your veterinarian. Euthanasia is hard, but it's humane!

Kenneth and Dorothy Bottom

Exchanging glances

EDITOR:

Last week, I was studying in the upstairs lounge area of Rudder Tower and couldn't help but notice a man reading a newspaper on another couch. Well, this man must have taken my glances in a rather affectionate way because he soon was lying on the couch directly across from me. I thought it rather odd because the other eight couches were empty. He proceeded to smile and wink at me. I, in return, voiced a few unsociable comments and he left. Don't get me wrong, I have no inborn hostilities toward homosexuals, but I do prefer that they keep their seductions to themselves. Belief in who we are and what we are is important to all of us, but let's all be careful when displaying ourselves to others and have some consideration.

Ted Johnson '89

Don't be insulted

EDITOR:

It's too bad Shawn Blue feels he has been "insulted" by Bob Wiatt's statement that "every man is a potential rapist." What Blue fails to realize is that is precisely what the victim feels. Even men who are friends of a woman can become rapists — look at the problem of "date rape."

It's a tragic shame that in the world today there are evildoers who prey upon others. But anger over an insult is petty when placed next to the terror and agony a victim feels. The sting of an insult goes away in a little while, but the pain of a rape victim endures for years. I know, I've been there.

Margaret Shannon

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.

The Battalion

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