

# Opinion

## Aggies in Washington D.C. are in good company

Besides the Texas A&M campus, perhaps the easiest place to meet an Aggie is in Washington.

In the three months I worked in the district, I met A&M graduates on the subway, in restaurants, on the observation deck at the top of the Washington Monument and on Capitol Hill. When I toured the Pentagon, my guide was Class of '75.

About 1,500 Aggies live in the D.C. metropolitan area, according to the local Former Students' organization. The group has existed loosely for a long time, a club officer told me, but it has only been organized for about two years.

I stumbled on to the club by accident when I ran across several former Battalion staffers in a restaurant. They invited me to the club's monthly happy

hour at a local bar. I thought maybe a dozen recent graduates would attend, but more than 40 people, some of whom graduated 15 years ago, were there.

In the fall, Aggies gather at a local club to watch the A&M football games televised on ESPN. If the game is shown on Raycom, the club will arrange to get the game by satellite. The two big activities for the A&M club are a summer barbecue and, of course, Muster.

It's just as easy to meet a Texan in Washington. The Texas Breakfast Club, which meets once a month, brings together all transplanted Texans, visiting Texans and "Texans-by-marriage." At the three breakfasts I attended, the audience ranged from 30 to 200 people. After working with Connecticut "Yankees," who constantly teased me about my alleged accent, it was a treat to hear southern

drawls and lots of "ya'lls."

It also was a relief to be around people who could sympathize with my yearning for chicken fried steak and

has existed among Texans and among Aggies. The bonding among both groups is well-known, even to outsiders. This was best expressed in the invocation at one of the breakfasts: "Thank you, God, for Texans. Without them, the world wouldn't be worth a darn." Aggie Spirit teaches that "Aggies" can be substituted for "Texans" in that invocation.

As a freshman, I thought the concept of Aggie Spirit and all it meant was neat. As the semesters passed, I became much more cynical. Sure, I liked A&M, but the eternal bond theory seemed to carry things a little too far. People who believed wholeheartedly in it were the ones who wrote letters to *The Battalion* saying "Highway 6 runs both ways."

To make things worse in most Aggie's eyes, I didn't think the University of Texas was such a bad school; I worked

for *The Battalion*, perceived by many as a "liberal rag," and I didn't think it was sin to ignore hallowed tradition and skip almost every yell practice my senior year or leave football games early.

I can't say I've completely changed my mind. However, there just might be some truth to both the Aggie and the Texas bond. I think that once you leave the school, and especially the state, it becomes more evident.

Deep down, I probably always felt these bonds. But when you live in Texas and are around 36,000 Aggies everyday for several years, they aren't as evident. The feeling of "being an Aggie" takes the back seat to surviving academically.

So instead of admitting I'm an Aggie or Texan only when asked, I found myself bragging about it. There is something special about both.

*Kirsten Dietz is a senior staff writer for The Battalion and a guest columnist.*



fajitas. I had to explain what both were to the people in my office — they hadn't heard of either.

The "good ol' boy network" always

## America needs guys such as Gorbachev

The urges of rock fans are primal. They have been known to riot, occasionally kill and, in East Berlin of all places, they recently battled police to hear a "Genesis" concert on the West side of the infamous wall. They shouted, "The wall must go," which is music of its own kind, "Down with the pigs," which is a refrain heard here on occasion and then, most troubling of all, the name of their hero: "Gorbachev, Gorbachev." He is no singer. But he is singing some sweet song.



Richard Cohen

democracy and the Soviet Union that's politically repressive and economically stagnant. And yet in Europe, where it may count the most, many people cannot discern a difference between the leaders of the two countries.

Washington is just beginning to feel a twinge of uneasiness at this turn of events. (One of the surveys of European public opinion was secretly commissioned by our own government.) The town has been riveted by the shenanigans of Lt. Col Oliver North and his Wagnerian (both in height and politics) secretary, Fawn Hall. But sooner or later, even Reagan administration officials will connect the shift in European public opinion with what's happening in the Senate Caucus Room.

The ultimate folly of Reagan and his most zealous followers is that they have chosen to fight wars that matter least.

The Contra phase of the Iran-Contra hearings is just one aspect of the Reagan Doctrine. The Reagan administration is also fighting on other fronts — Angola and Afghanistan, for instance — and has not shied from "Showing the flag" — usually by affixing it to a rifle barrel.

It's most signal victory to date has been the "reflagging" of Grenada. And while the effort in Afghanistan cannot be equated to the one in Angola, the United States under Reagan has nevertheless left the impression that it has a mighty quick trigger finger.

Perceptions are important. They're particularly important in Western Europe where governments are democratic. Public opinion must be taken into account. An Atlanta alliance electorate increasingly beguiled by Gorbachev and wary of Reagan is not likely to support leaders who wish to stand fast against the Russians or who are rightly skeptical of Soviet intentions. Already, Western Europe and Japan have refused to materially support the United States in the Persian Gulf — and it's their oil, not ours, that's at stake.

Ronald Reagan came to power prepared to do battle with an aging and ideologically ossified Soviet leadership. He adopted some of its tactics — the use of proxies to wage wars — but seems not to notice that new guys have taken over. Covertly or overtly, we fight the old wars, rattle billion-dollar sabers and send warships to do the work of diplomats, while in the streets of East Berlin, rock fans shout the name of Gorbachev. It's a foreboding sound of the future to which the Reagan administration has turned a tin ear.

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## Where baggage is aeroneous

I haven't missed very many days this year without flying on somebody's airplane. I have more frequent flier points than Peter Pan. I hate delays like everybody else does, and I worry if the federal government doesn't fork over some money for the air traffic controller system, airplanes are going to start running into one another.

But there's something else that also bothers me about air travel. Doesn't anybody check their bags anymore? Carry-on luggage has gotten terribly out of hand. Each time I fly, I see at least one idiot walk onto the plane with enough luggage to send a fully grown mule to its knees under the weight.

I see people with huge hang-up bags, suitcases, briefcases and their company's entire computer system attempt to walk down a crowded airliner aisle without hitting somebody in the head with all that equipment and giving them a

concussion. Others attempt to put what wouldn't fit into a Ryder truck into one of those tiny compartments over their seats.

You had to do that sort of thing back when you had to ride a bus or train. On the way to college, you lugged your suitcase to your seat and put it into the rack above your head.

That's also where you put your guitar and the box lunch your mother prepared for your trip.

You don't have to do that anymore. You can give your bags to an occasionally friendly person at the airline ticket gate and your bags will be stashed in the bottom of the airplane and you won't have to fool with them again until you land in Peoria.

True, from time to time airlines do lose checked baggage. Better to risk that, however, than to risk hernia hauling all those bags onto and off of the plane.

"Passengers seem to think they can save a great deal of time by carrying on their luggage and not having to wait for it at the baggage claim," a Delta employee was telling me.

I fully expect someone will get on an

airplane one of these days with a crate full of live chickens and a goat on a rope.

It can't be safe to have all that luggage and whatever else people bring onto airplanes stacked all over the passenger compartment.

I don't want the plane to hit sudden turbulence and have a lugs-and-bolis salesman's sample case fall on my head. Airlines are crowded enough with human beings to bring all that stuff into the passenger compartment. I get on airplanes today and feel like I'm riding on the back of Jed Clampett's truck with Jethro Bodine.

I think you could cut down on some of the delays if you didn't have 80 percent of the passengers aboard a flight taking 15 minutes to find a place for all their junk before sitting down.

On second thought, it's OK to bring aboard a box lunch your mother prepared for your trip, airline food being as bad as it is. Just leave the chickens and goats at home or put them on Greyhound or Amtrak.

More than likely, they'll be waiting for you when you get off the plane.

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## Mail Call

### Poor little orphans

EDITOR:

I have to admit I was more than a little amused at the plight of the former residents of Davis-Gary quoted in Friday's *Battalion* article "DG residents, official differ on relocation." They complain that housing officials overreacted, and that "a lot of intermediate steps were avoided." They also whine that officials did not "try hard enough to track down the individual vandals."

"I never in my wildest dreams figured they could kick out an entire dorm," one student is quoted as saying. Well, never in my wildest dreams could I have imagined a fairly large group of supposedly college-educated adults caring so little about the place where they lived that they would enjoy spending their free time destroying it — \$5,000 worth of damage to windows alone. What were these poor, mistreated, misunderstood kids expecting, a note to every resident explaining that the bad old housing office would

really prefer that they not play so hard in the dorm, or maybe the threat of detention hall?

The University has been more than gracious in allowing these people to return to on-campus housing. They are not being inconvenienced by a move mid-semester, and they've been informed three months before their return. I'm sure that there are many who never participated in any vandalism, but given the situation, housing officials had no other intelligent choice. Congratulations and a pat on the back to them, and I'll cry a tiny tear for all of Davis-Gary's orphans a little later.

**Michael Gardner**  
Former Schuhmacher resident

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