

# Opinion

## Summer offers respite from boorish distractions

As a veteran of five years at summer school, I think I can speak with some authority. Summer school is the way to go.



Karl Pallmeyer

During the summer, things are much more relaxed. The days pass slowly by into a mellow, if somewhat humid, haze. Life is reduced to the two main pursuits of studying and drinking. Studying can be put aside if you get behind on your drinking.

It's much better to go to school in the summer than it is during the regular semester. For one thing, you don't take as many classes, and it's easier to keep up with the load. It's also easier to get terribly behind, but that's the price you have to pay. The bright side is that even if you hate a class, you only have to suffer for five weeks.

One big advantage summer school has over the fall semester is the lack of football. Most of the fall is spent trying to find a date to the games, trying to get tickets, trying to get to the stadium, trying to get out of the stadium, trying to get drunk after the game and trying to catch up on all the schoolwork you've neglected in favor of the football game.

During the fall, all conversation is dominated by how bad we're going to beat the next opponent, how the referees made all the calls in favor of the last opponent and how other teams did against our future opponents.

Conservative demi-gods like Ollie North and Ronnie Reagan are replaced by Jackie Sherrill and various oversized, illiterate goons who get paid to run head first into various other oversized, illiterate goons. We don't have to put up with all that football garbage in the summer.

During the summer, Texas A&M almost looks like a real school. We don't

have to put up with the fascist fraternity in fatigues — the Corps of Cadets. Although various members of the Corps are here in the summer vainly attempting to bring up bad grades that were the result of spending more time playing Rambo than studying. A few other CTs hang on in the summer to help brainwash the new freshmen at summer conferences and Fish Concentration Camp, but they are not the pervasive force they are in the fall. We don't have to put up with tons of sweating cadets marching down the middle of the road singing songs about eating burnt dead bodies and feeling veins in their teeth.

In the fall, over half the student body is possessed with the task of cutting down lots of trees and stacking them together so that they can be burned. In the summer, the only fire we have is used to barbecue steaks and hamburgers.

There are several drawbacks to summer school. The most vicious enemy of summertime is the heat. It's

quite a feeling to open your car door and have the hot air rush out with such power that it knocks you clear across the parking lot. After a couple of minutes in the summer heat, the elastic band in your underwear turns to liquid, and your socks feel like plaster of Paris. I try to fight the heat with the air conditioner but end up paying electric bills that exceed the cost of toilet seats at the Pentagon.

Another drawback of the summer is the flood of incoming freshmen swarming the campus. I don't mind the fact that more people are coming to school, but I hate to hear them being subjected to the philosophy of tradition. Incoming students are told about all the things they are supposed to do to become Aggies. They are led to believe that nothing at this school has changed in more than 110 years, and that they should do everything in their power to insure that nothing will change. They are told they must go to yell practice, they must go to the football games, they must not walk on the grass, they must work on bonfire, they must love Ronnie

and Jackie, they must buy a maroon white Buick after graduation and they must give money to the Association of Former Obnoxious Students. They are told they must learn to think like Aggies. They are not told that if they want to grow and learn, that they must challenge every single notion they have ever held about religion, politics, philosophy, love, life and the universe.

Before long it will be fall and the campus will be overrun with CTs and newly molded freshmen on their way to football games and bonfire. There will be no time to take a nice, leisurely look at the world and contemplate one's place in the universe. Some people seem to like having other people think for them. Some people seem to like having other people live their lives for them. That must be why people like Jackie, Ronnie, Oral, Ollie, Jerry, and Jim and Tammy make so much money. The fall is about to happen.

Karl Pallmeyer is a journalism graduate and a columnist for The Battalion.

## The repair-free auto: an impossible dream

I have a dream. I dream that someday I will own a car that is completely operational, completely problem free. A car that will always start, never stall, never overheat. A car that will require only routine maintenance — an oil change every 3,000 miles, water in the radiator, an occasional lube job.



Paula Vogrin

An impossible dream? Yes, if you happen to be a member of the Vogrin family.

Other people can buy cars and drive them for years and years without a single problem. Members of my family are lucky if a car makes it home from the dealership.

You see, my family has a history of Chronic Automobile Breakdown. Unfortunately for my sisters and me, this problem seems to be hereditary.

For as long as I can remember, my parents have had cars that spend a great deal of time in the shop. If my family had a nickel for every dime that's been spent on car repair, my father could retire and we could spend the rest of our lives on the beaches of an island in the Carribean. Really.

My family's Chronic Automobile Breakdown condition became aggravated in 1978 and has been deteriorating ever since. There seems to be no hope for a cure. We're terminal, and we'd give anything for just six months of remission.

Yes, 1978 was the year my parents bought the Oldsmobile Custom Cruiser (a fancy name for an orange station wagon with a stereo, power windows and brown wood paneling on the outside). We'd had a few problem cars before, but none could have prepared us for the Custom Cruiser. Everything went fine for a few weeks, then the starter went out. It got fixed. It went out again. It got fixed again. The air conditioner broke. It got fixed. It broke again. It got fixed again. It broke again. It stayed broke. That was the summer of the record-breaking heatwave in Texas when there were 20 or so days of 100 plus temperatures. The Custom Cruiser was renamed "the hotbox."

After several years of oil leaks, electrical shorts, dead batteries and various other maladies, we were able to unload it on some poor sucker who didn't have the faintest idea what he was in for.

In the mean time, my father bought a 1978 Ford Pinto for me to drive. It's red with a white stripe and looks a lot like a College Station mail car except the stripe isn't solid — it breaks into sections which give the car the appearance of a peppermint.

That Pinto had character, even if it didn't work. The clutch went out. The air conditioner stopped working. It had an oil leak. The seats ripped. The carpet came out. The dashboard cracked. The fuel gauge didn't work. The dashboard lights didn't work. The brakes didn't work, and the glove compartment wouldn't close. By the time my sister Andrea inherited it in 1984, it was a mess. She was driving from Dallas to A&M last spring when the muffler fell off on Interstate 35. It was put totally out of commission at the beginning of this year when Andrea ran over something and tore a big hole in the oilpan. There's still a big black stain in the parking lot of our apartments where five quarts of oil gushed from the mortal wound. We thought about shooting it to put it out of its misery, but, instead, it sat in the same spot until my father had it towed to a garage six months later. The oil pan was repaired last month, but the brakes are out now.

My mother and I got new cars in 1983 and 1984. She got a Ford Tempo and I got a Chrysler Laser. The Tempo was totaled (by me) within six months, and it was a blessing in disguise. In its short six month lifespan, the Tempo was in the shop for repairs seven times, and five of those times it had to be towed in. After I wrecked it, I thought my parents would buy something more reliable, but they bought another Tempo. If it wasn't a darker shade of brown, I'd swear it was the same car, it's in the shop just as much as the first one was.

My Laser worked alright the first year I had it. The day after the warranty expired, the battery went dead as a door nail. It wouldn't hold a charge, and I had to shell out \$50 for a new one. Since then, something has gone wrong every other month. The speedometer cable broke twice. The electronic fuel injection stopped injecting. The clutch cable broke. One of my factory installed speakers blew out. My air conditioner broke twice. Both front wheel covers fell off, and it has overheated numerous times. It will be paid for next August, sooner if I get a good job, and you can bet it'll be up for sale the minute I make the last payment.

Then maybe, just maybe, I will buy a repair-free car and live happily ever after. Wake up, Paula, you're dreaming.

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



"Relax... at least we don't have to endure any televised hearings."

## Patriotism is not Greek to me

Relations between Greece and the United States are supposed to be quite chilly. I read that in a newspaper before I flew here for a brief vacation, sailing around a few of the hundreds of Greek isles.



Lewis Grizzard

I was sitting in a tavern in the coastal fishing village of Leonidion, eating cucumbers and tomatoes out of the tavern's own garden and I asked Peter, a cab driver who spoke English, if he thought the Americans ought to get out of Greece.

"Is rubbish," he said. "Is stupid. The Americans go and the Turks come in the next day." The Greeks and the Turks next door have been bickering and fighting for several hundred years and probably won't ever stop, and that's why Peter the cab driver can't figure out what on earth his

government wants the Americans to leave for.

"The Americans go," he said, "and Greece is nothing."

So, all that to introduce this: There were six Americans aboard *La Fluthe Enchante*, a French-owned sailing vessel, and when the Fourth of July caught us at the end of our journey in a port near Athens, we had to decide what to do to celebrate our independence.

None of us had ever been out of the country on the Fourth.

"Let's do what we'd do at home," somebody suggested, "drink beer and shoot off some fireworks."

The beer part was easy. We couldn't locate any fireworks.

Our skipper, Frenchman Jean Pierre, decided he would help. He ran up all his colorful flags, signifying something very special was happening aboard his boat. He also brought up some champagne.

Nancy Anderson, a high school librarian, put on a "Run for Liberty" T-shirt. I shaved for the first time in three days.

We were well into the champagne when somebody — it could have been me — decided we should sing. There were many other vessels moored next to us.

"We shouldn't disturb anybody and come off as loud, obnoxious Americans," another of the party suggested.

We decided to sing "The Star-Spangled Banner" and "God Bless America" very softly as not to bring attention to ourselves.

Try standing on a boat in a foreign country on the Fourth of July with a glass of champagne in your hand and singing patriotic songs softly. It's not possible.

After the singing, a man called to us in a distinct accent and asked why all the flags.

"It's the Fourth of July," answered Nancy Anderson, adding with a lifted glass, "God Bless America!"

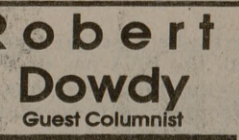
And the man, I know not his nationality, smiled and said, "Yes, God bless America!"

It was one of the best Fourth's, we all agreed, we'd ever spent.

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## Math is against blacks in baseball

One of the more serious issues in baseball this season, along with the increase in violence, is the lack of blacks in management positions.



Robert Dowdy  
Guest Columnist

It all started back in April when then-L.A. Dodgers Vice President Al Campanis remarked that blacks lacked the "necessities" to manage a baseball team. This initiated a new wave of criticism against management hiring practices in baseball and professional sports in general.

The Rev. Jesse Jackson came forward to threaten that if every major league club didn't have an affirmative action program by June 29th, he would call for a boycott of games by blacks, hispanics and women.

There's a fundamental flaw in that approach; namely, his misreading of the reason why people attend sporting events.

Baseball is not thought of by most fans as a business. It's a sport. It's entertainment. So it's ridiculous for Jackson to think that he can change the attitudes of sports fans because of what is going on in the front office.

Nevertheless, Commissioner Peter

Ueberroth — who I had admired up to this point — gave in to Jackson's demands and is working to establish new hiring programs among the clubs.

Jackson called off his threat before the deadline.

From 1981 to the middle of the 1984 season, Frank Robinson — himself a great ballplayer — became the first black man to manage a major league club when he piloted the San Francisco Giants. During that time he compiled a 264-277 record, with a third place finish in '82 being the high watermark. Robinson was a good manager, but he suffered from the same factors that many managers have to deal with: impatient owners and lack of consistent play. The Giants are now benefitting from the shrewd trades and excellent minor league teams that Robinson developed, producing such talent as Candy Maldonado, Jeff Leonard and Olympian Will Clark.

One of the biggest obstacles for black managers is the perennial practice of teams hiring the same faces — a sort of 'Good Ol' Boys club' — regardless of their previous managerial records. Perhaps that is one area where Jackson's pressure can be beneficial. But there is another factor that Jackson cannot affect: simple mathematics.

If Jackson would look at baseball history he would see why there are very few blacks in management. About forty years ago Jackie Robinson became the first black to make it to the major leagues.

Now consider how long it takes to become a manager in the major leagues. He usually comes from the playing ranks (but not always), manages for years at the minor league or college level, and only by the incident of a manager retiring or getting fired does he get the chance to move up. To think of the applicants' pool from which the owner can choose. What percentage of these applicants — all of whom have to be above criteria — would be black, or some other minority? Probably no more than 10 percent. Because although Robinson broke the color barrier in the forties, blacks and hispanics didn't make their mark until the sixties. And if these players ended their careers in the mid-to-late seventies, then they wouldn't be entering the applicant pool until about now.

So Jackson stumbled onto an issue that was going to solve itself in a couple of years. And he'll probably get the credit for it.

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### The Battalion

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