

Opinion

Two-percenters improve A&M despite 'Good Ags'

I am writing in response to the letter that appeared in Tuesday's *Battalion*, written by Mary King.

Michael Gardner
Guest Columnist

She's upset because a few freshmen haven't yet immersed themselves in Aggie traditions and propaganda to her satisfaction. She says, "My response to these freshmen (why didn't you refer to them as 'fish,' for Jackie's sake?) is that there are other universities willing to take people who do not care. I beg them to please go if they are going to knock anything to do with A&M."

Well, I don't remember the moment when Jackie struck us with the bolt of lightning that sent us under the Iron Curtain; maybe I was off spitting on some Aggie memorial that day, like any self-

respecting two-percenter. But if I'm not mistaken, TAMU is still located in the United States, where differences of opinion are guaranteed, appreciated and encouraged. Isn't this also the place where folks are innocent until proven guilty? Did it occur to you, Miss King, that these freshmen weren't yet familiar enough with Aggie fervor to be lead by it unfaithfully? I guess not, or you wouldn't have written your letter.

Given my proud status, by your definition, as a two-percenter, I suspect you'd like to ship me off to someplace where people of my ilk belong, say UT. Let me tell you something about one "Bad Ag." I participate in few Aggie traditions because, besides thinking that many of them have outlasted their original purpose, I don't have the time. Poor excuse, I know. But that's because my time outside of classes and work is filled not with football games and

yell practice and drinking at the Chicken and humping it and playing Traditions Police around campus, but with wicked and evil two-percenter activities like working with MSC Aggie Cinema, a group that works hard at entertaining more than 20,000 Aggies each year. In fact, I've been a member of seven different MSC committees, held leadership positions in six of those committees and chaired three of them. All seven committees provide a program or a service for Aggies, from College Bowl to Madrigal Dinners and Literary Arts. Depending upon the size of the program, a chairmanship takes between 30 and 40 hours a week during school, and other leadership positions take 15 to 20 hours each, with the only compensation offered (or needed) being the knowledge that I've worked hard to entertain and educate the students of this University. I've also served as a

KANM D.J. for three semesters, a privilege for which I have to pay so that the station may continue to operate.

I've made none of these accomplishments on my own, and I've very much enjoyed every one of them. Don't get me wrong, I have my party time too. And I have nothing against yell practice or football games or most any of the other trappings of being the Aggie you want to be. Your letter was insulting, Miss King, in a way I don't think you anticipated; too many times in this space I have seen letters that imply that because I don't melt and get all weepy when I hear "Hullabaloo Caneck Caneck," or because I have never worked stack and never will, that I am doing nothing here but sneakily getting the benefits of an education and ruining everyone else's good time. My point here is to let all of you "Good Ags" know that there are a

few of us out there whose blood not run deep maroon, but who nonetheless genuinely care about this place and the people who are here, ALL of the people who are here, whether they feel silly "wildcatting" or not. And we want to help TAMU continue to grow, become more interesting, more diverse each year. We are of the opinion that Texas A&M is already as good as it ever will be that nothing should change, or anyone who is different belongs someplace else.

My point may not make it through your logic-proof 12th Towel, but one never knows. Tries. And just try to send my love the other way on Highway 66. I'm ready to go.

Michael Gardner is a guest columnist for The Battalion.

Falwell preaching prejudice and hate

In the Nazi concentration camps, prisoners were identified by the color of their cloth badges. Jews wore yellow, communists red and homosexuals pink. Along with the others, homosexuals were marked for extermination. They died, like Jews, gypsies and the disabled, for the "crime" of being what they could not help but be.



Richard Cohen

Americans of the nearly mythical gay school teacher who seduces little boys. The evidence for such charges is lacking: Sexual molestation of school children is rare to begin with and homosexual molestation even rarer. But Falwell, in need of funds, had no patience for facts. He pressed the button of homophobia to get his cash.

The press holds politicians accountable for what they say via mail. Falwell should be no exception to the rule. In the first place, his actions and political pronouncements have made him something of a politician. And in the second place, what he says in mailings is just as important as what he says in the public arena. A letter has a kind of between-you-and-me intimacy to it. To the recipient, it seems to say: "This is what I really think. On 'Nightline' and other television shows, Falwell might appear to be a paragon of reason and tolerance. His mailings say otherwise.

In the history of the Holocaust, the persecution of homosexuals is a mere asterisk. Books have been written on the subject, but the account has been overshadowed by the greater numerical crime perpetrated against others — six million Jews, say, as against possibly 15,000 homosexuals. Maybe for that reason, it is no longer possible for a civilized political figure, especially in the United States, to be even vaguely anti-Semitic. It remains possible, however, to be a demagogue when it comes to homosexuals.

Jerry Falwell, possibly ignorant of his historical antecedents, is the example that comes to mind. In a recent fundraising letter, Falwell writes about AIDS as if homosexuals invented it to foist on the heterosexual community when, in fact, they suffer most from it. He says homosexuals "have expressed the attitude that 'they know they are going to die — and they are going to take as many people with them as they can.'" Falwell calls this "sexual TERRORISM" — and even more deadly than a gun or a bomb.

Falwell is in a high dudgeon in his letter. He says that "militant homosexuals — carriers of the deadly disease — have gained civil-rights advantages" that endanger most Americans. Falwell does not say what these "advantages" are, unless by advantages he means equality. He says homosexuals have compelled "local communities to force morally upstanding citizens to work alongside homosexual AIDS carriers." He neglects to say that no one has gotten AIDS from merely working alongside someone. The contact has to be a bit more intimate than that.

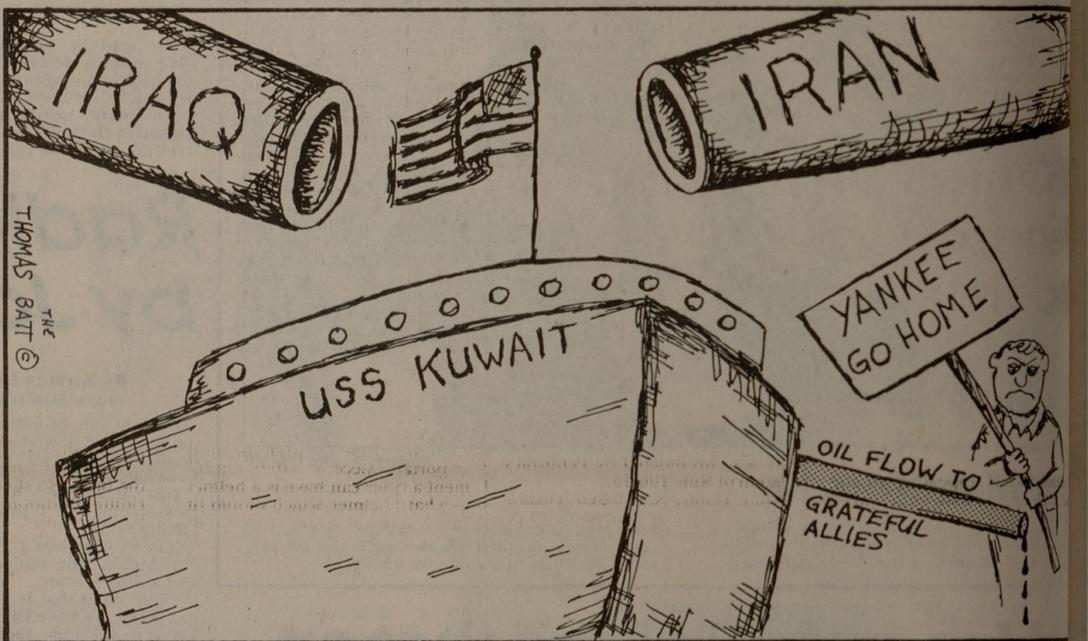
For Falwell, lies and innuendoes about homosexuals are nothing new. Homosexual bashing is his hobby horse. Several years ago, for instance, he was a virtual Paul Revere of homophobia, riding hither and yon warning

Public-opinion polls attest to the general low regard in which Falwell is held. But to those who believe in him, he remains a potent force. People who think beating up gays is sport can look to Falwell for succor. Homosexual groups report an increase in just such activities. Last year, 5,000 incidents of harassment or violence directed against gays were reported. Falwell's letter all but provides justification for such incidents. He is the chaplain of American homophobia.

The mere mention of Nazi concentration camps colors any discussion. The image is too horrible, the experience too awful, for usual discourse to continue. Surely the United States is not Nazi Germany and the homosexual community is in no peril. And yet we know from this experience the infinite possibilities of hate and bigotry. We know, too, what can happen when public leaders, including ministers, either offer no rebuke to hate or mine it for their own purposes — and worse, are saluted by respected politicians.

AIDS is a frightening prospect. The number of potential victims chills us. Reasonable people will disagree on what should be done. I, for one, differ with the organized homosexual community on limited mandatory testing. I'm for it. But there is an older and, even, more pernicious disease than AIDS and that is hate — hate of a minority that is different through no fault of its own. That disease has already claimed more victims than AIDS is likely to. Falwell fights one by encouraging the other.

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Telephones: instruments of torture for journalists

At least 17 reasons for taking a sledge hammer and smashing all telephones into unrecognizable dust occurred to me in the newsroom on a recent Saturday.

Carol Rust
Guest Columnist

A lady was quite moved by an article we printed in the newspaper this month on New Jersey. She was just certain her uncle in Javahoney, Tenn., would be, too, and could we send her a copy so she could send it to him?

"We ran it in the paper this month?"
"Or last month — I can't remember."
"Just what did the article say about New Jersey?"
"Oh, it was something about the state."
"Just what aspect of the state was the article about?"
Long pause. "It was about New Jersey."
Another phone was ringing. Turns out someone's cousin dyes peoples' hair with Kool-Aid and it's a new trend and if we did a story NOW, we'd have the jump on all the television stations.

And speaking of television stations, a woman called right then to see why one of them didn't show any blacks at the city council meeting in their newscast Tuesday.
"Why don't you call the station and ask them?"
"Well, I didn't want to bother them since it happened five days ago."

You can always tell when a grade-school civics teacher has assigned a new project.

"Um, yes, who is our mayor, who is the current governor of Nevada and what is the state motto for New York? Well, the mayor is Maury Meyers."

"Spell that."
"M . . ."
"M or N?"
"M, like in Mickey Mouse."
"Mickey Meyers?"

Just then a man called to tell me the world was going to end in minutes Rocky Mountain Time. I pointed out that we were an hour earlier in Central Standard Time and that the world must have already been over for 15 minutes. "God bless you," he said and hung up.

Then there are those who get stumped on a question in Trivial Pursuit who excuse themselves from the game to go to the bathroom, sneak into a back bedroom somewhere and use the phone.
"What do the H's in 4-H stand for and what play was Lincoln watching when he was assassinated?"

I have also noticed that most people wait until Saturday night to think of everything that's ever made them mad and then call the paper.

"Just what do I have to do to get a paper delivered? I have asked you people and asked you people until I'm blue in the face, and . . ."

"Sir, you need to talk to someone in circulation."

"Well, give me someone in circulation."

"Their offices are open during regular business hours, sir. If you could call back Monday between hours of . . ."

"It's just like you people, always giving me the run-around. Don't give a damn at all or am I the person you don't deliver a paper to?"

"I don't deliver the papers."
"You're telling me! Let me talk to someone in charge."

"I'm the assistant city editor. I'll be happy to take . . ."

"Yeah, and that's all you'll ever be — an assistant."

"I hear Houston has two very good papers — have you had a chance to look at them?"

I would have loved to stay on the phone with him all night but the other phone was ringing.

"Just what in the Sam Hill do you think you're doing writing that ridiculous piece in the paper?"

"Which ridiculous piece, sir? I write many of them a day."

"That stupid write-up on Reagan."

"Oh, THAT one."

"You damn liberals are all the same. You're not worth the air I breathe in 10 minutes' time. If I knew how close the Communists were to taking over this country . . ."

"Yes sir, I hear they're in Javahoney, Tenn., this minute."

"Or New Jersey, I can't remember."

Carol Rust is assistant city editor of the Beaumont Enterprise.

The Battalion

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