

# Opinion

## American workers suffering from disrespectful bosses

Many young Americans are criticized for their lack of competition while in college and later, in the business world. Some say our products are not being made with the same quality or enthusiasm as in the good old days.

**Elisa Hutchins**  
Guest Columnist

As a 22-year-old college student who works, I can't understand how my generation could be guilty of such a crime. What could be the reasons for millions of young adults to steal from their work place, to call in sick, or to just not care about their jobs and worry only about their next paycheck.

We couldn't have been born this way. Something or someone must have happened to us to cause such problems at work.

I stumbled onto one possible reason when the assistant manager of the bookstore I work in and I argued over a policy change.

Since he is an employee of Texas A&M and might be recognizable, I will refer to him as Egghead.

Egghead had an inspiration to put down the entrance gate to the textbook area of the bookstore at 5 p.m. everyday. The store closes at 6 p.m.

He opened a small glass door located in the patio bookstore that was now the only entrance to the store.

To understand where the problem comes in, you have to know the layout of the building. The A&M Bookstore just opened a patio addition of reference books and magazines which Egghead is manager of.

There are two cash registers used in the store. One in the new section and the other is in the textbook area. I am in charge of the latter and run it religiously from 4 p.m. to 6 p.m. Along with this task, I am responsible for answering phones and doing credit card charges.

Egghead and Gladys (a 16 year die-hard employee and my immediate boss) have an ongoing competition to see who can get the most money in book sales. Whenever she can, Gladys lures his customers into the textbook area to purchase their books. And Egghead in return, will go get textbooks for people and bring them to pay in the patio store. It's all good clean fun, right? Huh!

I came in to work Thursday and not more than 10 minutes after Gladys left for the day, Egghead began putting the gate down. Since I am a lowly part-time student worker on the lower rung of the ladder, I was not told of this change in policy.

"Are we closing early today?" I asked my friend.

"This place close early, you've got to be kidding," she laughed.

"What is that #\$\$\$%\$ doing? Everyone will think we are closed and they will have to come in through the patio bookstore to get a textbook," I said.

My friend just looked at me after this comment because I usually don't say things like that.

Anyone who has worked in a bookstore knows it can be boring. Not boring like listening to Lt. Col. Oliver North say "I don't recall having shredded that." But boring in the sense that you want to be out in the sun getting a tan and not working in the basement of the Memorial Student Center.

This was an exciting break from the monotony of ringing up customers' books for the second summer session, seeing their eyes dilate to three times their normal size when they saw the total and reciting our return policy.

Egghead, having seen the horror on my face from his bold move, asked me if I had any problems with what he did. I told him I did because everyone was looking in the gate and asking if we were closed.

He said that if I didn't like it, too bad. He was my superior and had permission from the manager to close it.

I told him that I would go see Mr. Manager in the morning to find out why anyone would want to have seven employees being paid by the hour, wandering around an empty bookstore because no customers were coming in.

He politely told me that if I went over his head, it would be the sorriest day I ever had.

I couldn't believe he said this! He threatened me, and the customers in the store before this fiasco happened, were eagerly looking on as the fur began to fly.

"If I want to talk to Mr. Manager, I will. I have the right to speak to him and it doesn't mean I'm going over your head." I tried to stay calm.

Egghead, having gained the reputation as a student-worker hater after he made a girl in customer service cry, couldn't believe my response and left in disgust.

The next day, I didn't say anything to Mr. Manager out of mortal fear. I have been working at the bookstore for seven months and in that time the extent of our dialogue has been a hurried "hi." But I've always respected the man for hiring me and have not had any problems before. I knew I could talk to him and he would understand that giving his permission to close the gate was lacking in good business sense and that Egghead should not have threatened me. Was I asking too much?

The problem kept rambling around my brain. I would try to read my journalism book and in mid-sentence the phrase "what a

jerk" would pop into my mind. I had to talk to Mr. Manager and get rid of this problem.

When I went in to work, I decided to do it. My palms sweated as I went past the secretary and into Mr. Manager's office.

"Can I talk to you?" He motioned me to sit, and I blurted out the situation in full detail. Of course I only remembered what Egghead had said and left out anything that I may have done. When I finished a peaceful feeling came over me, and I could breathe again. But the feeling was short-lived.

I promised myself I wouldn't get upset and remain tactful before going in. But I could feel my eyes begin to swell with tears as Mr. Manager told me that he would back Egghead all the way. When Mr. Manager left for the day, he said, Egghead was in charge.

"I know who my bosses are, but he had no right to threaten me and humiliate me in front of customers." My words and tears came rolling out.

"You do a good job here, and I appreciate your work but he is your boss and if he says something, I will back him 100 percent," he said.

I couldn't believe it! I felt as if I were a nail and Egghead and Mr. Manager were hammering me into the ground. I had been put in my place with all the other peons.

"Once they become managers, they're all like that," Gladys advised after I told her what happened. "I used to get upset and go home in tears and now I just go home mad."

Where is the justice? I pleaded my case and nothing happened. I felt helpless. At this point, I no longer respected Mr. Manager and as for Egghead, I could only say "#\$\$\$%\$."

Though I am a student-worker, I should have some say in matters and all managers should respect and at least be civil to their employees. After all, it's all of us little people that make this earth spin.

I felt like stealing a roll of toilet paper from the bathroom for some revenge. I could either quit or go back to work with Egghead.

I could relate to the factory workers, illegal aliens and any others who have to take this day after day. No wonder people get so fed up with their jobs.

Everyone wants to supervise, and no one wants to admit to being wrong.

But I don't usually. The muckracking, anti-establishment journalist in me couldn't sit still for this. So I QUIT!

**Elisa Hutchins is a senior journalism major and a guest columnist for The Battalion.**

## Mail Call

Education helps improve life

EDITOR:

Frank Fay raised several important questions in the July 30 issue of *The Battalion*, and deserves honest answers. His concern that "product competition" between nations resulting from students returning to their respective countries with American technological training is unfounded. Most foreign students at A&M are sponsored by universities and communities to study in graduate programs so when they return to their native countries, they will have a strong technical background in their field. Their training allows them to teach skills and technology that will be used to improve living conditions in their country. With respect to competition, a more important fact is that their training requires that they use the same equipment used during their studies and research. Mr. Fay should be satisfied that the "product competition" he vaguely refers to in his letter is really an opportunity to create a wider market for U.S. goods and equipment. Thus, educating foreign students does not encourage competition, but prevents it.

These students can also improve the quality of life for thousands in other countries. Therefore, the Texas Legislature has created a tuition schedule that requires out-of-state and -country students to pay their fees in full according to a theoretical average expense. Only Texas residents may receive subsidization from Texans' tax dollars. Implying that foreign students are taking advantage of our educational system is insensitive and misleading. If these students help give people outside the United States a better life, then let our system continue educating them, even if immigration laws do not allow those who would stay here a chance to live with American rights and privileges.

L.A. Reinhardt

Letters to the editor should not exceed 300 words in length. The editorial staff reserves the right to edit 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.

## When it's the good old summertime

I pulled into one of those mini-service stations that double as convenience stores on the south side of Atlanta for gasoline and something cold to drink.



Lewis Grizzard

The heat. What the heat has been like practically all over the country.

"I was in Chicago," a man said to me, "and it was 96."

That's Chicago. Unbearably cold in the winter. But when the Hawk goes back to Canada for the short summer season, you miss the big chill. I'm glad I don't live in Chicago anymore.

I spotted them outside the service station. The hood was up on their car, an older model something or other. I quit keeping up with models and makes of cars in the late '50s or whenever it was Fireball Roberts got killed.

The wife sat on the curb drenched in perspiration. Her little boy sat next to her, occasionally pulling on a large bottle of Coke. He was shirtless and shoeless.

The husband had half his body under the hood of the car. He had taken off his shirt, too. There were Alabama license plates on the car.

I watched the man work in the awful heat. Obviously, his car had overheated. He was pulling hoses out and putting hoses back in. He had a towel around his neck. He used it to wipe off the sweat that was pouring from his face.

He suddenly pulled his hand back from under the hood. Something had burned his hand. He flung the

towel down in anger and cursed the car, the heat and the hell-hot asphalt on which he stood. I hadn't mentioned the humidity. It just hung there. I swear you could feel almost touch it.

I am naturally nosy. I asked the woman what had happened.

"We're moving to Tennessee," she said. "Lonnie's got a job west. This old car started running hot."

"The air conditioner don't work neither," said the little boy.

I would have offered the man help, but my knowledge about matters automotive ends with my way to turn the key in order to cranking.

I drove on north toward Texas and began thinking about what had just seen. Imagine driving to state to state in this heat without conditioning, I thought to myself.

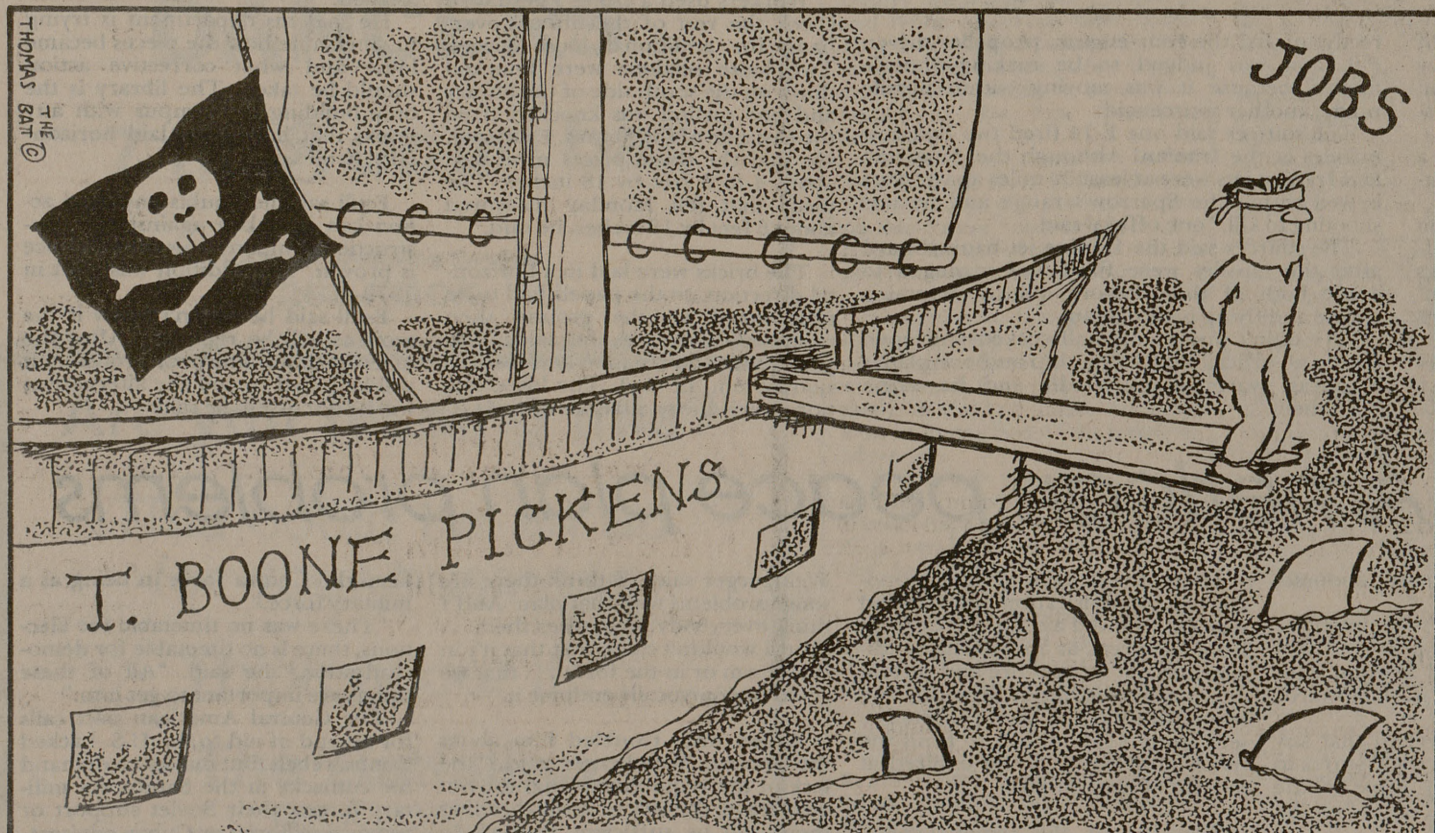
Imagine the wife complaining and the kid crying and the sweat pouring off you in torrents.

I thought back to the VW I had when I was first married. We had air conditioning either and once had a flat tire on the outskirts of Macon, the hottest place on earth. My wife had to change the tire. I fanned with a folded road map.

As I drove on, I turned my air conditioning to full blast. The comfort of that brought me the discomfort of at least a tinge of it. I'm tooling down the road as cool as can be, and poor Lonnie and his family are baking next to their car in the Georgia sun.

I at least said a prayer for the God help them to make it to the job in Tennessee, and if that old crate breaks down again at least be near a shade tree.

Copyright 1987, Cowles Syndicate



### The Battalion

(USPS 045 360)

Member of Texas Press Association Southwest Journalism Conference

#### The Battalion Editorial Board

Sondra Pickard, Editor  
Jerry Oslin, Opinion Page Editor  
Rodney Rather, City Editor  
John Jarvis, Robbyn L. Lister, News Editors  
Homer Jacobs, Sports Editor  
Tracy Staton, Photo Editor

#### Editorial Policy

The Battalion is a non-profit, self-supporting organization operated as a community service to Texas A&M University, College Station.

Opinions expressed in *The Battalion* are those of the author, and do not necessarily represent the opinions of Texas A&M administrators, faculty or Board of Regents.

The Battalion also serves as a laboratory newspaper for students in reporting, editing and photography classes in the Department of Journalism.

The Battalion is published Monday through Friday, Texas A&M regular semesters, except for holiday vacation periods.

Mail subscriptions are \$17.44 per semester, \$34.88 per year and \$36.44 per full year. Advertising rates are on request.

Our address: The Battalion, 216 Reed McDonald, A&M University, College Station, TX 77843-4111.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to The Battalion, 216 Reed McDonald, Texas A&M University, College Station, TX 77843-4111.