

Opinion

Pallmeyer: The man, the myth, the legend

If you've never heard of Karl Pallmeyer, then don't bother reading on.

But if you've been around this school for any significant length of time, and you've either faithfully or occasionally read *The Battalion*, then you might have noticed that a once-unique part of this newspaper is now gone.



Sondra Pickard

Graduation called, and Karl Pallmeyer left. A *Battalion* legacy, as I like to think of him, has moved on.

Karl wrote for *The Batt* for about three years, and during those three years, Karl made more people mad than ... well, I'm sure he made everyone mad, at at one time or another. Those he didn't upset were die-hard Pallmeyer fans. In other words, you either loved him or hated him — when it came to Karl, there was no in-between.

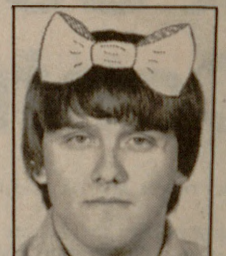
Karl made a difference at *The Batt*, and I'd like to believe that his words made a difference at Texas A&M. In the time that he was here, many minds were changed. After reading his columns, the staunch conservative majority was usually outraged, while the more liberal minority celebrated. But more important, Karl made us all stop and think — he was a master at it. If only for a few minutes after each

column, he forced us to question what was going on around us, whether on campus or across the world. At times he was subtle about it. Most of the time he wasn't. But it takes a lot more than subtlety to get through to people — especially Aggies.

If you were around this summer and had the privilege of reading his last *Battalion* column, you know he went out in flying colors. But I think Karl warrants much more than just "so long, it's been fun." Before the remainder of his loyal readership — whether fans or foes — graduates, more should be said about what he accomplished here.

I remember the first time I saw Karl in *The Batt* newsroom. At the time, I was a wee sophomore, just enrolled in the beginning reporting and writing class. I hadn't even considered working for the newspaper, and the thought of someday being editor didn't exist. My journalism adventure had only just begun, but Karl had already established a singular reputation.

He was sitting in front of a computer, leaning back with his feet propped up next to the screen and the keyboard resting on his lap as he wrote. He was never without a calm, relaxed expression. He was obviously at home there and content with the words he was writing — words that would probably wreak havoc and cause great discontent the next day. Every now and then, Karl would glance up and smile, but he never said much. When he did, it usually came out quietly, and when he talked, it was always worth listening.



"So this was Karl Pallmeyer?" I thought. "That radical, obnoxious, communist-columnist that I'm supposed to hate if I want to be a 'Good Agg?'" I said hello, and expected him to jump up and start ranting and raving at me about how ridiculous traditions were, how wonderful the Soviet Union was, and why in the world was I wearing that abhorrent bow on my head in his newsroom? (I've never actually worn one of those bows, but I thought he might bring up something like that just for kicks.) I thought of Karl as a bitter, confused Scrooge — a sort of Grinch-who-stole-Christmas type who was unhappy with everyone and everything.

I was dead wrong, just like some of you were and a lot of you still are. As anyone else who bothered to take the time to really know him will tell you, Karl is a pleasant, happy person who is really a lot of fun to be around. His columns often lead you to think otherwise, but Karl the person was nothing less than a good person. Maybe more concerned than most, but, no

doubt, a good person. Judging what he spent a lot of time trying to do here, I consider him better than that. It's not at all difficult to get on his good side, and I would venture to say that, once there, Karl will accept anyone just the way they are — even if they are in a khaki uniform or wearing a huge, red bow.

The first day of class this semester, the guy sitting next to me asked about my major. Once the word journalism was out, the conversation quickly turned to whether I worked for *The Batt* and whether I knew Karl Pallmeyer. "Is Karl still here this semester?" he asked. "That guy makes me so mad! Why does he even go to this school? ... I can't wait to start reading his columns."

The irony here is clear. The complaints, gripes and moans about Karl and the things he wrote were endless. But the complaints, gripes and moans would be noticeably absent if the complainers, gripers and moaners hadn't read Karl's columns in the first place. It seems his worst enemies were

also his most avid readers. Already this semester, an irate gentleman has come to complain about Karl and to ask if we would hire such a columnist at a respectable institution. At the end of the conversation, I finally got in the words, "Karl doesn't work here anymore." Hopelessly confused, with nothing left to shout about, the man could do nothing but hang up.

Karl tried to put a dent in "the establishment," an establishment that needs denting if it's ever to grow or change. He tried to make at least a stop and think about whether what we're doing and what's going on around us is really of such paramount importance, is really right, just because everyone else says so.

A science-fiction author named Harlan Ellison put it this way: "A few, as heroes, patriots, martyrs, reformers in the great sense, and men who serve the state with their consciences and so necessarily resist it for the part; and they are commonly treated as enemies by it."

Karl's rebellion against the system, ironically, became an A&M tradition. There was a method to his madness. Whether you believe it or not, that method had nothing to do with aggravating people just for the sake of later basking in their aggravation.

Most considered Karl Pallmeyer an enemy of Aggieland. I think of him instead, as its friend.

Sondra Pickard is a senior journalism major and the editor of *The Battalion*.

Mail Call

LSU fans were awful ...

EDITOR:

Last Saturday four Louisiana State University fans were arrested by police. The Aggies were outscored and had their campus trashed. I, as well as countless other Aggies, am appalled by the atrocious behavior shown by a group of people who were visitors at our school. Prior to the game I had heard stories of their lewd and immature actions, but I never expected them to pour beer throughout and threaten to spray-paint (cans in hand) our newly dedicated Alumni Center or taunt and ridicule officers of the law.

Never before have I been so proud to be able to call myself an Aggie. We may have had less points on the board, but we left with the pride and dignity in ourselves that exemplifies the truth of Aggie Spirit. Way to go, Aggies! C'mon Tigers, even t.u. shows more class than you do.

Christi Cano '88

... but Aggies have been, too

EDITOR:

Reading through the editorials Monday and hearing critiques of the abominable LSU fans made my thoughts return to an especially rowdy late November day in Austin three years ago.

I vaguely remember yelling, harassing and provoking a few t-sips. Faint memories of drunkenly running on the field and taunting our defeated opponents seem to appear in my head. Unfortunately, I don't remember stopping to ask if there were any special traditions we might have been violating.

Assorted visions of Sixth Street — of fights and, oh yes, an occasional not-so-polite word coming out of the mouth of a fellow Ag — haunt my memories. And what was that song we sang? Something about "Texas Bites?"

I do distinctly remember hearing several times, "I sure will be glad when they're gone." I remember these incidents all too clearly when I hear about these horrible guests called LSU fans. Maybe someone should write about hypocrisy instead.

Elizabeth Harwell '88

A student or a guest?

EDITOR:

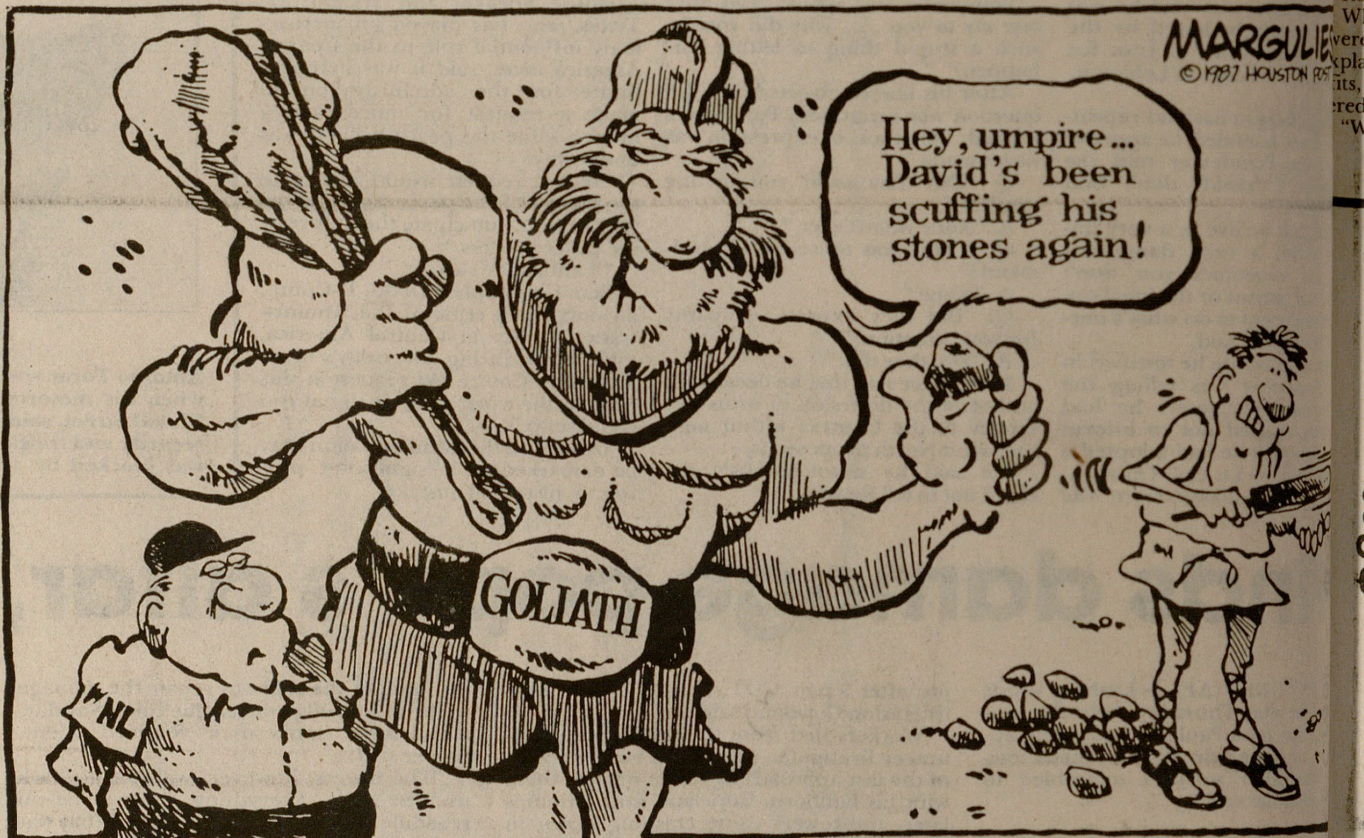
Sometimes I wonder what being a student at Texas A&M is all about. This weekend I ended up watching the A&M-LSU game on TV. Why? Because I didn't have my student I.D.

I did have my paid fee receipt, a valid Texas driver's license and my student I.D. from last fall. The only option I had was to purchase a guest sticker for an additional \$10.

Common business practice says that the customer is always right. Texas A&M students pay to attend their school's games — and then are expected to pay even more. I wonder what will happen when the students turned away from their football game are asked for donations to the school after graduation. Are we going to feel like cherished former students? Or like guests?

Kelly F. Snook Boles '88

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.



Taking to the links in Scotland

We are friends and fellow golfers, and we came to Scotland, where the game had its origins, to play the great courses we have seen so often on the telly when they play the British Open.



Lewis Grizzard

We played the Old Course here at the Royal and Ancient Golf Club of St. Andrews, Carnoustie, Royal Troon, Turnberry, Old Prestwick and Muirfield, home of the 1987 Open. These courses date so far back that after a round of golf in weather that usually isn't fit for man nor horse, the first golfers rubbed sticks together to build a fire to warm and dry themselves before going home to the caves.

I could discourse at length about my impression of Scottish golf courses, but since I am teeing off shortly, allow me to offer a brief overview in case you are a golfer and ever have the urge to take the same trip.

• **THE WEATHER:** As one of the announcers said during the Open at Muirfield, "If this golf course were an airport it would be closed."

• **THE ROUGH:** Scottish rough is like the Roach Motel: You may check in but you won't check out.

• **CADDIES:** Listen to what your caddie says. If he says aim your drive at the drunken Scotsman on the hill, aim your drive there.

Your caddie will know exactly what he is talking about, and if you don't listen to him, he might take out your sand wedge and mash you over the head with it.

• **MOVING THE BALL FOR A**

BETTER LIE: I tried that. Once a caddie advised me in no uncertain terms: "In Scotland we play the ball lies." I considered such an interpretation harsh due to the fact I had just sliced my shot to the 18th hole and into a fat woman's lap in the pub that adjoins the course.

• **THE SCENERY:** Incredible, providing you can see it through the rain.

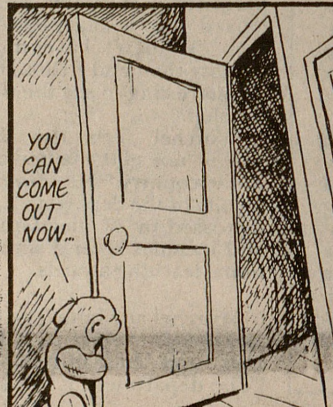
• **TOUGHNESS OF THE COURSES:** I'll put it this way: said member of our group who was of Scottish descent: "Now I know why our ancestors left Scotland. To find an easier golf course."

• **HAS THE TRIP BEEN WORTH IT?** It's been the thrill of a lifetime despite the fact my caddie, Bunker said, "You're a wee bit daft if you call yourself a golfer."

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BLOOM COUNTY

by Berke Breathed



The Battalion

(USPS 045 360)

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

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

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

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

Mail subscriptions are \$17.44 per semester, \$34.62 per school year and \$36.44 per full year. Advertising rates furnished on request.

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

Second class postage paid at College Station, TX 77843.

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

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