

# Opinion

## Help on the way for cyclists, other addicts

The man in the orange cycling shorts stood up. He was sweating. He glanced around the room and smiled nervously.



Mark Nair

"Hi," he said. "My name's Scott, and I'm... I'm a bike rider."  
 "Hi, Scott," the group said together.  
 Scott frowned. "I don't know where to begin."  
 "Start wherever you like, Scott," the Good Doctor said, smiling. "Remember, we're all in this together. We're all going to help each other. Just be open."  
 Scott paced. His cycling shoes clicked sharply against the floor.  
 "I suppose it all started with my Big Wheel," he said. "A Christmas present, you know. But then I gradually moved on to bigger things: a tricycle for my second birthday, a pair of training wheels here, a banana seat there. Soon I was up to ten speeds without even knowing it."  
 "It really got bad when I was in college and started riding to school. It was practical transportation, and the bike lanes were safe. But after a while, the adrenaline rush was no longer there. I need more. Something more

exciting."  
 Several members in the group nodded.  
 "So," Scott continued, "I started riding in the car lanes, and when the cars would back up for a light I would... I would zip in between them." He wiped his mouth with his hand. "At times, I would even run stop signs and cut in front of cars without signaling." He was breathing heavily now. "Can I have some water please? I'm very thirsty."  
 Someone handed him a water bottle. He drank with long, deep swallows.  
 "Of course," he said, water running down his chin, "it wasn't all my fault. The drivers, they're crazy. In my early days, when I obeyed the rules, they would never pay attention to me. I would stop at stop signs, of course I would, but when it was my turn to go, cars wouldn't yield. The would just drive, and drive, and drive! And then honk. At me!"  
 He drank again, with his eyes closed and head tilted far back.  
 "Go on, Scott," someone said.  
 "Yes, go on," the Good Doctor added. Scott took a deep breath. "I think the cars, the drivers with their leering grins and taunting middle fingers, those were what put me over the edge. It wasn't long after that when I bought my first pair of... of... Oh! Do I have to say this?"

"Please," the Good Doctor said. "I will help you."  
 Scott looked down. "I'm out of water," he said.  
 Someone handed him another water bottle.  
 Scott poured the water over his face. He pushed his hair away.  
 "They were toe clips. My first pair. They transformed me into a bullet on wheels." He looked around the room slowly. His eyes were bloodshot; dark bags were piled beneath them. His face was taut and miserable. "And then it was that day..." His voice drifted of "Aw, don't stop now," said the people with the water bottles.  
 "I was at a red light," said Scott, "a lot of other bike riders. Before the light turned green they started to cross the street. I was going to wait for the light, but then they started chanting 'Come on, Scott, don't wait. Cross with everyone else. Nobody waits for the

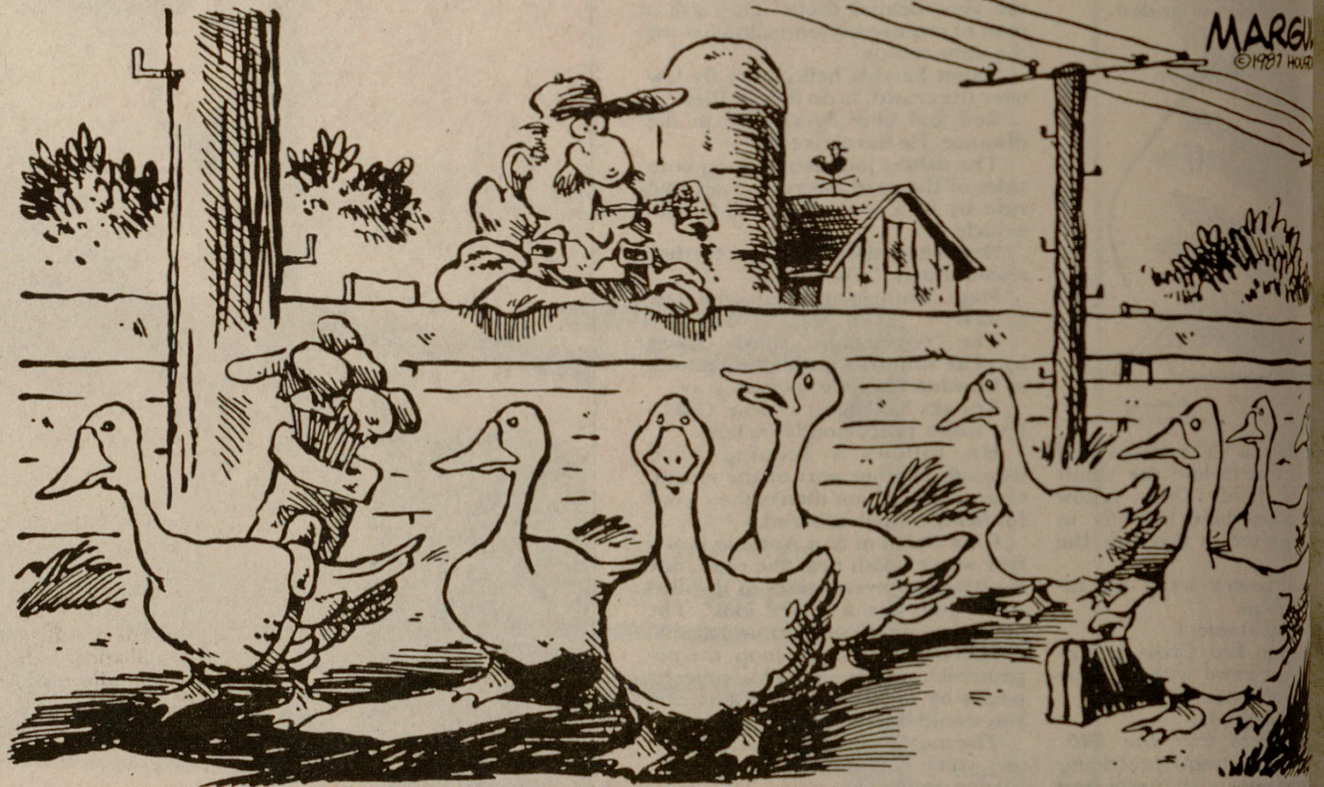
light anymore.' And I couldn't resist. I had to go. I had to submit. I was peer-pressured into crossing before the green light. I was thrown into a life of bicycle crime. I couldn't stop after that. I had to ride. I had to satisfy the craving."  
 Scott blew his nose in a handkerchief melodramatically.  
 "Now, I ride as close as I can get to people. It's a thrill to watch them jump back in surprise. It feels great to have them call me names. It is the best thing to ride as dangerously as possible." He lowered his head. "But I hate it. It's tearing me and my roommates apart. I hate it. I need help."  
 He sat down and started crying.  
 The Good Doctor crossed his legs. "Don't worry, Scott. We all understand that cyclists like yourself thirst for the help and benefits that our group therapy can offer. All of us in this room have problems, some similar and some

different. But what we all have in common is our need for guidance. We are all experiencing trauma. But soon, we will all be able to control them and defeat them." The Good Doctor smiled a perfect smile. "Who else would like to introduce himself?"  
 A woman stood up in the corner. She was wearing a tight miniskirt and luminous pink lipstick.  
 "Hi," she said, "my name is Brenda and I'm in a sorority."  
 "Oooooooohh," said the group together.  
 Mark Nair is a senior political major and a columnist for The Battalion.

## Papal mass defies gloom predictions

We came. We saw. We celebrated Mass.  
 All 300,000 of us.  
 And despite predictions of gloom, doom and destruction, the papal Mass in San Antonio ran smoothly.  
 Prior to Texas' first papal visit, controversy surrounded the 144-acre site where the Mass was scheduled to be held.  
 Crowds exceeding 1 million people will mob the grounds and surrounding neighborhoods, the experts said. There won't be enough water, first aid stations or toilets, they said. And there will be too many fire ants.  
 Nothing short of a miracle, it seemed, could save the Mass and the masses from utter devastation.  
 The most vocal and visible of the naysayers was Dr. Katharine Rathbun, San Antonio's former health director. She resigned her job, charging that hundreds could die because organizers of the Mass were ill-prepared.  
 "It's just hard to believe if you've never dealt with disaster work that a church service could kill people," she said in an Associated Press story a couple of weeks ago. "There's nothing in the fact that it's a church service that is going to do away with the heat and sun of a San Antonio September."  
 But there were plenty of toilets, water and Red Cross volunteers. And nobody died. Even traffic problems were minimized by an efficient shuttle bus system.  
 The city was obviously prepared for Pope John Paul II.  
 This was, in fact, the most impressive part of the whole production — the organization.  
 Of course it helped that the turnout was actually 200,000 short of the estimated 500,000.  
 People strolled casually to and from the site. Nobody was trampled.  
 When an elderly lady fainted, three

Red Cross volunteers were immediately at her side.  
 And the most strenuous task some camouflage-clad National Guardsmen faced all day was retrieving hats blown off the heads of the Mass-goers.  
 Yes, there was even a breeze, which made the humid Texas heat a little more bearable.  
 The altar, though it lacked the twin 150-foot towers destroyed by high winds two days before the Mass, was still easily visible. The sound system was superb.  
 The pope spoke eloquently in fluent English and Spanish.  
 If it sounds like I'm carrying on, it's only because I was sincerely amazed.  
 I don't know what I was expecting. People dropping like flies around me, perhaps. Having to "hold it" for hours on end. Or simply utter chaos.  
 But I, like many of my fellow pilgrims, was pleasantly surprised.  
 And a little annoyed with those who'd cried "wolf."  
 All the negative publicity, no doubt, kept a lot of potential pilgrims away. Organizers advised only those in top physical health to attend, excluding the young, the elderly and the handicapped.  
 While the relatively low turnout made it more comfortable for those of us who did attend, I can't help but feel sorry for those who were scared away.  
 They missed the angelic sounds of a 500-member-strong choir. They missed the sense of unity felt by all those present, Catholic or not.  
 They missed a universal message of hope brought by the world's most widely-recognized religious leader.  
 They missed a well-organized historical event.  
 But, more to the point, they missed a beautiful celebration.  
 It's not every day you get to see the pope.  
 Karen Kroesche is a senior journalism major and At Ease editor for The Battalion.



"The way air travel is these days... we decided to walk south for winter." — Margie

## Mail Call

**Lines, lines everywhere**  
 EDITOR:  
 Texas A&M students can register by telephone and request fee options. They can also pay all fees, including optional fees, by mail or in person.  
 But A&M students have to wait in lines and waste hours in front of the University Police Department trying to pick up their already-paid-for parking permits. Why? Because, according to the UPD, students have not registered their cars yet. But can students register their cars in advance? No.  
 During the first summer session, I tried to register my car to avoid problems in the fall, but with no success.  
 I came back on Sept. 2. On Sept. 4, I went to the UPD to pick up my parking permit. There were no lines, but an officer sent me home because it was "juniors day," and I am a graduate student. She told me to come back on Sept. 5 — "all students day."  
 Saturday morning I returned to the UPD, but a policeman stopped me at the entrance to the parking lot. He said that because of the long lines of students already waiting, the UPD was not able to assist anyone else. He told me to come back on Sept. 10, another "all students day." What was in front of the UPD on the morning of Sept. 10? A long line of students.  
 The current system of providing students with their parking permits is slow, rigid, and forces A&M students to waste valuable time. The police could hook up with the University's telephone registration system to allow students to register their cars at the same time they ask for parking permits. Students could then receive by mail, with no hassle, their registration slip, I.D. cards and parking permits.  
 Erika Gonzalez-Lima  
 graduate student

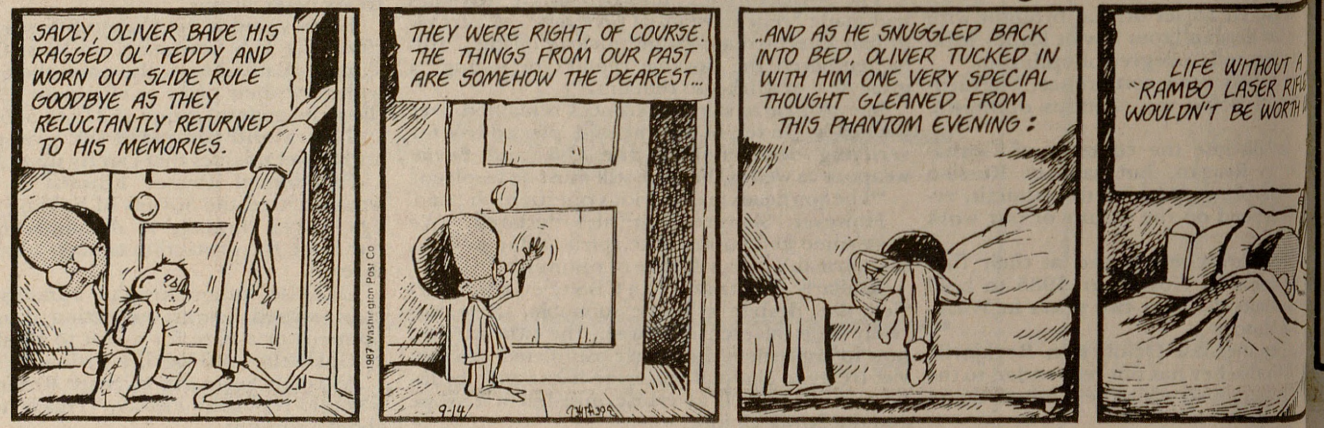
**Behind the times**  
 EDITOR:  
 This letter is in response to the September 10 letter from the "Virgins Only" club members. Your concern for the virgin status of the Class of '91 is about as touching as the conduct of LSU fans while visiting A&M, and your remarks about Fish Camp are inexcusable.  
 After attending as a freshman, three-time counselor, chairman, and campfire speaker, I feel I am qualified to comment.  
 First, the last all-night dance was held at Fish Camp '85. Second, the freshmen were never "forced" to participate in this aspect of camp. Third, the hand-drawn line is used to form a single line for going to camp meeting rooms. The single line is formed to provide camp uniforms and to also provide a lead for each person as he walks through the campground at night.  
 As far as counselors engaging in and encouraging general promiscuity, I strongly disagree. A few isolated incidents over the past several years is nothing in comparison to the thousands of freshmen and counselors who have had a positive Fish Camp experience.  
 It is sad that you are so narrow-minded that you can see Fish Camp for what it really is. Fish Camp is not a time for freshmen to experience an attack on their virginity, friendships and to learn what being a Texas Aggie is all about.  
 Cliff Dugosh '86

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