

# Opinion

## The Battalion

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## Teaching rights

The right of public school students to publish without censorship has long been upheld by the U.S. Supreme Court. Many school officials, however, are too quick to trade constitutional principles for political expediency.

Such is the case with the Hazelwood School District, near St. Louis, Mo. The Supreme Court today will hear arguments in a case stemming from the district's attempt to censor a student newspaper's stories about teen-age pregnancy and the effects of divorce on children.

Hazelwood is only the latest in a long string of districts that have attempted to prevent publication of stories they fear will draw fire from parents and the community. Courts from California to Maine repeatedly have ruled that public school officials, as government employees, violate the First Amendment when they censor the student press.

The decision to censor potentially controversial stories may be easy in the short run. But by doing so, public school officials violate the principles the public school system is designed to teach. In *Tinker v. Des Moines*, the landmark students' rights case, the Court said students do not leave their rights behind when they enter the school. Unfortunately, many school officials seem to be leaving their courage at the door.

## Restitution, capital punishment provide key to judicial reforms

When a man is convicted of breaking the law in our country, the sentence imposed upon him takes him from freedom and shuts him up in a prison with others like himself. He lazily rots in this cesspool of humanity until the time deemed necessary for him to atone for his offense has expired.



Brian Frederick

Our society deems that he has received his due reward, that the time he spent imprisoned pays for his crime.

Man, however, was intended to live in freedom, fully exercising his faculties to choose how to live and bear the responsibility for his choices. To place him in a cell and force him to live a circumscribed existence in which he exercises no responsibility and has no freedom of action is to depreciate his humanity.

Furthermore, prison does nothing to heal the wounds he has caused to others. A punishment that condemns a man to a mere existence while failing to assuage the hurts of his victims is an unmitigated cruelty: to the criminal, to the victims, and to society.

Even so, imprisonment has been used from antiquity as punishment for criminals. But even though prisons enjoy the sanction of centuries, it is

immoral to use them for any more than temporary detention while suspects are awaiting trial.

Why do we put thieves in prison to fester and learn new methods of thievery while leaving their victims bereft of their stolen property? This benefits no one, and the prisoners are an added burden to taxpayers who must pay for their maintenance.

In crimes against property, it would be much more effective to compel the convicted thief to make restitution to his victims. After all, he chose to break the law by damaging the property of another and thus incurred an obligation to restore it, regardless of any attendant hardship to himself. Unless justice forces him to compensate his victim, it is not true justice.

For those convicted of such crimes as murder, rape, and kidnapping, there is another solution: capital punishment, a penalty far more humane than living out one's life in a cage.

Some will object that capital punishment does not deter crime, but it can hardly do so when it is but sporadically applied. For it to be effective, it must be prescribed by law when a person is convicted of certain crimes. For example, if someone is convicted of first degree murder, he must be executed: the judge should have no choice in the matter.

Only when people know ahead of time what the law is and what the consequences of breaking it will be can that law be effective in deterring crime.

If someone knows he assuredly will die if convicted of murder, that knowledge will deter him. Capital punishment in our country presently is impotent, for only a very few of those convicted of capital crimes are ever executed.

As reason alone distinguishes us from animals, we must use reason when dealing with our fellows if we are to be truly human. When a man eschews the use of reason to solve a problem and instead chooses violence, he has descended into the animal realm. He has demonstrated that he understands only violence, and he must be dealt with accordingly. The only moral thing to do is to destroy him as one destroys a rabid dog, for he is a threat to other men.

Our present criminal justice system is immoral, a travesty of justice which serves only to exacerbate crime. Putting criminals in prison as punishment is like sweeping dirt under the carpet. It serves only to hide the problem, which then festers.

We cannot continue to rely on prisons to deal with crime. They do not work, and they dehumanize their inmates. Only penalties that force men to face the consequences of their actions will restrain those who for too long have preyed upon the lives and property of law-abiding Americans. Restitution and capital punishment, consistently applied, can accomplish what our prisons have not and cannot.

Brian Frederick is a senior history and Russian major and a columnist for The Battalion.

## Searching for the texture that makes life worthwhile

College is where it happens. It is a place of dangerous struggle on which the course and quality of the rest of our lives may be determined. This struggle is made all the more dangerous because so few people tell us just how critical it is. I'm not talking about the struggle to maintain a good GPR and get a good job. I'm talking about the struggle to navigate the dark but enormous sea of possibilities in the curriculum while resisting the seductive voices of the sirens in each discipline trying to convince us to abandon all else for their sake.

Jerry Rosiek  
Guest Columnist

We are surrounded by people, students and professors alike, who have found their avenue and abandoned the neighborhood. They are our old high-school buddies who haven't had anything new to say in years. At our age, it's far too early to decide we know enough and dig in. So the struggle is to keep from drying up, to not only keep learning things but to figure out how to find new things to learn. And college is where it happens.

Even if we don't buy the idea that one or the other thing is all we need to know, we still feel the pressure to know it by test time. The struggle isn't over—it just shifts locales. Our fear for the future can drive us at a hectic pace, and this threatens to dry us up in another way. Even if we manage to keep in touch with the possibilities in the curriculum, we can lose touch with what's going on right around us. And in our zeal to give our lives some sort of security, we can cut ourselves off from the texture that makes life worth living.

It's this second type of struggle that is giving me trouble. The best remedy I have found so far to a world being narrowed by approaching tests and paper deadlines is travel. Not just any road trip will do, either. It needs to be to someplace we've never been before, if possible where people speak another language. I know that may seem to be asking a lot, but I didn't write the rules. Anyway, camping trips aren't all that hard, and Mexico isn't all that far away.

I remember my drive back into College Station at the beginning of this semester. The sun was setting on a wet road as I drove west on Highway 105 toward Navasota. The horizon was bright with a burning orange sunset that was in motion because the clouds were blowing through it so swiftly. The orange light on the blue-gray rain clouds had turned the sky purple. And the grass hills rolling on either side of me were an eerie gray in the dark light. The whole scene was so beautiful as I sped along the wet road, made to look like a strip of bright orange glass by the

setting sun, that I no longer felt I was driving. I was being carried away.

Then as I came around a long, slow curve, the sun was momentarily blocked by the Highway 6 bridge over Highway 105. For a moment, I almost continued on Highway 105, pursuing the sunset. But habit and my preconceived destination took over, and I turned north on Highway 6.

The sun was still setting to my left, and the sky was still purple. But it wasn't the same. The closer to College Station I got, the more I began to think about all the things I needed to do. I had to find a place to live. I had to register for classes. Suddenly I realized what was happening. My windows had fogged up. My attention had left the landscape around me and turned inward.

I seriously considered turning around. I wasn't ready yet for my summer to end. I wasn't ready for my world to dry up again. But I convinced myself it would be OK for just one semester. I decided to turn it into an experiment. I would see if I could use the momentum I had built up over the summer to reacquaint myself with all the things around here I'd come to take for granted. That was more than a month ago, and I have an idea now of how it is going. I think I'm failing.

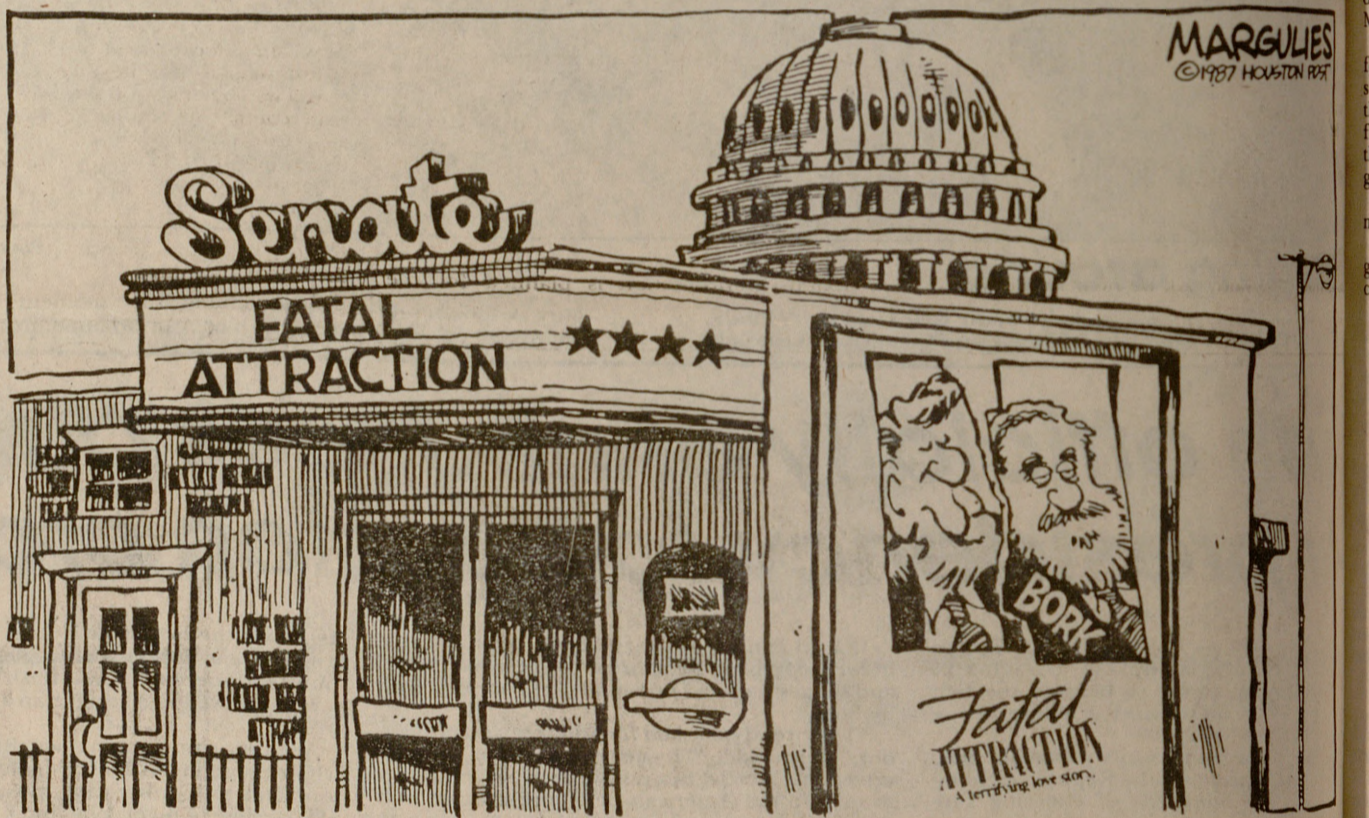
The first couple of weeks went well. I found myself living alternately in two worlds. One was a hodge-podge of the new relations I had made to the stuff around me. It was full of things like sunsets, train sounds, beautiful women, casual conversations and thinking about what other people were thinking. The other world, founded on cynicism, was one of fogged windows and tunnel vision. It was full of things like making sure I graduate, job worries, casual conversations, beautiful women and political beliefs.

Occasionally my cynical eye would wander through my hodge-podge world, laying it to waste with ridicule and tension. But like a quiet phoenix, the hodge-podge world would build up again out of new things and thoughts. This is something I'm glad to see; the beauty doesn't confront cynicism but endures it.

Lately, however, my hodge-podge world is slower and slower to re-form. More and more, I find I am badgering myself into inattentiveness for the sake of one project or another. This column was such a project.

What I'm looking for is a way to turn the tide, to put my cynicism on a leash and maybe to find better grounding for my political beliefs. I'm open to suggestions.

Jerry Rosiek is a senior physics and philosophy major and a regularly appearing guest columnist for The Battalion.



## Mail Call

### Let the music play

EDITOR:

At last, a part of this University in dire need of help is receiving attention. The announcement Oct. 2 on the front page of *The Battalion* concerning the appointment of a music coordinator was a long-awaited and welcome step in the right direction.

Many students who can play an instrument and have expressed a desire to continue playing past high school have arrived on campus and ended up lost as to where to turn. While the Fightin' Texas Aggie Band is world renowned, the Corps and marching is not for everyone. There is a definite lack of opportunity for the rest of us.

However, there is one well-organized group suffering only from low student awareness of its existence. The 80-member University Symphonic Band was formed in 1975 by Col. Joe T. Haney. It is a student organization currently under the direction of Bill Dean, former associate director of the Aggie Band. The Symphonic Band plays a wide variety of music with about two concerts per semester. The fall concert, sponsored by the Bryan Rotary Club, is scheduled for Nov. 19 in Rudder

Auditorium. Everyone is invited to attend.

Support the University Symphonic Band and the development of a well-deserved music program at this "world-class" University.

David Hess  
public relations officer, University Symphonic Band

### Don't abandon 'grode' stories

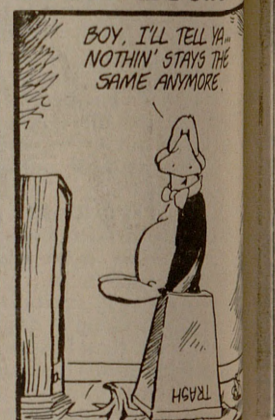
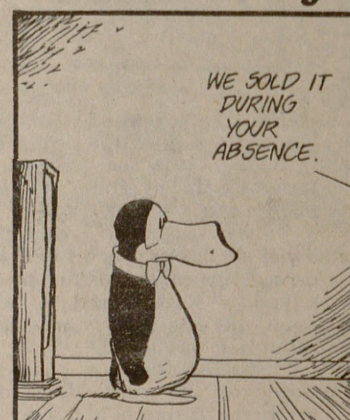
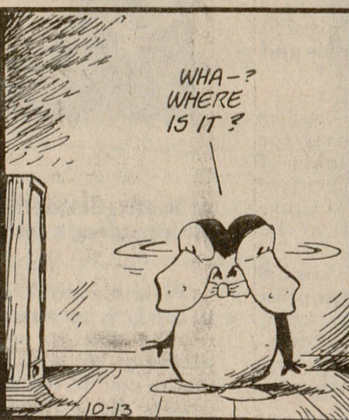
EDITOR:

I like Midnight Yell Practice. The sexually oriented stories told by the yell leaders have their roots in A&M's all-male past. These stories should remain a tradition. The objective of the stories is to unite the Aggie Twelfth Man against our opponents. I am sure the stories satisfy that objective.

Chris Warhurst  
accompanied by 61 signatures

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 author's name, address and telephone number of the writer.

## BLOOM COUNTY



by Berke Breathed