

Opinion

Don't underestimate dangers of alcohol

It's alcohol awareness week, and that's important news because too many people in the college setting don't take alcohol seriously. This isn't a lecture. It's simply the truth. A person can be responsible, or he can chance losing a few friends — or himself. I've taken the risk. It wasn't worth it. The lesson learned doesn't go away in a month or a year. It doesn't ever go away.



D.A. Jensen

I had the opportunity to go to the Motley Crue concert in Dallas with a few friends last month. I didn't go because I didn't want to be a passenger in the car with a drunk driver. I tried to convince the driver that I was concerned for his safety as well as my own. It didn't make a difference, but I'm glad I took a stand.

In 1985 I was confronted with a similar decision. I made the wrong choice. I didn't drive with my drunk friend, but I also didn't tell him how I felt about him driving drunk. I didn't try to stop him from driving, although I should have. It might have made a difference. Or it might not have. I'll never know now.

The scene was fairly typical, a group of friends sitting in a bar having a few drinks to bid farewell to an old buddy. Someone suggested moving the party to another bar in the next town. Everyone agreed, except me.

I was afraid to drive with a drunk, but I was more afraid of being honest and revealing my apprehension. I didn't want everyone to think I was a prude. I didn't want to put a damper on the group's good time. I lied. I said I had to

go home early and couldn't go with them.

The lie saved my life. I wasn't in the van when it flipped and hit eight trees. Two other people weren't that lucky. They can't read this column because they aren't alive today.

Bill, the driver of the van, called me the morning after the accident to tell me the details. I will never forget them.

The van was traveling faster than 80 m.p.h. when Bill lost control. It ran off the side of the road and hit eight trees. The last thing Bill remembered before he passed out was seeing the police arrive. He wasn't aware of the condition of the passengers.

He said he wasn't driving very fast because for him 80 m.p.h. wasn't fast — he owned a high-performance sports car. Unfortunately, a van does not perform like a sports car, but he was too drunk to make the discrimination.

I went to see the van after the accident. It moved me to tears. I don't understand how two out of the four people survived. The van was ripped in half. It looked like a crumpled toy.

I lost touch with Bill after the accident. He was a different person. He had to deal with the emotional repercussions of being responsible for taking two people's lives. He went to Pennsylvania. I didn't hear from him until October.

Bill asked me to testify on his behalf during his trial. He had been charged with DWI and manslaughter. I was the last person to see him before the accident. I was the one witness the court needed to confirm the blood test that proved Bill was intoxicated at the time of the accident. I had to tell the truth. I was no use to the defense.

I declined to testify despite the fact that his family offered to pay my travel expenses. Bill's lawyer agreed it was best

that I not appear. The evidence against Bill was damning enough without me telling the court that he appeared to be drunk when he left the bar.

The trial ended. The verdict was guilty. The sentence was a short jail term and probation. Bill went back to Pennsylvania to live with his family. He doesn't talk to any of his old friends anymore. The sentence given by the

court is nothing compared to the guilt he must live with.

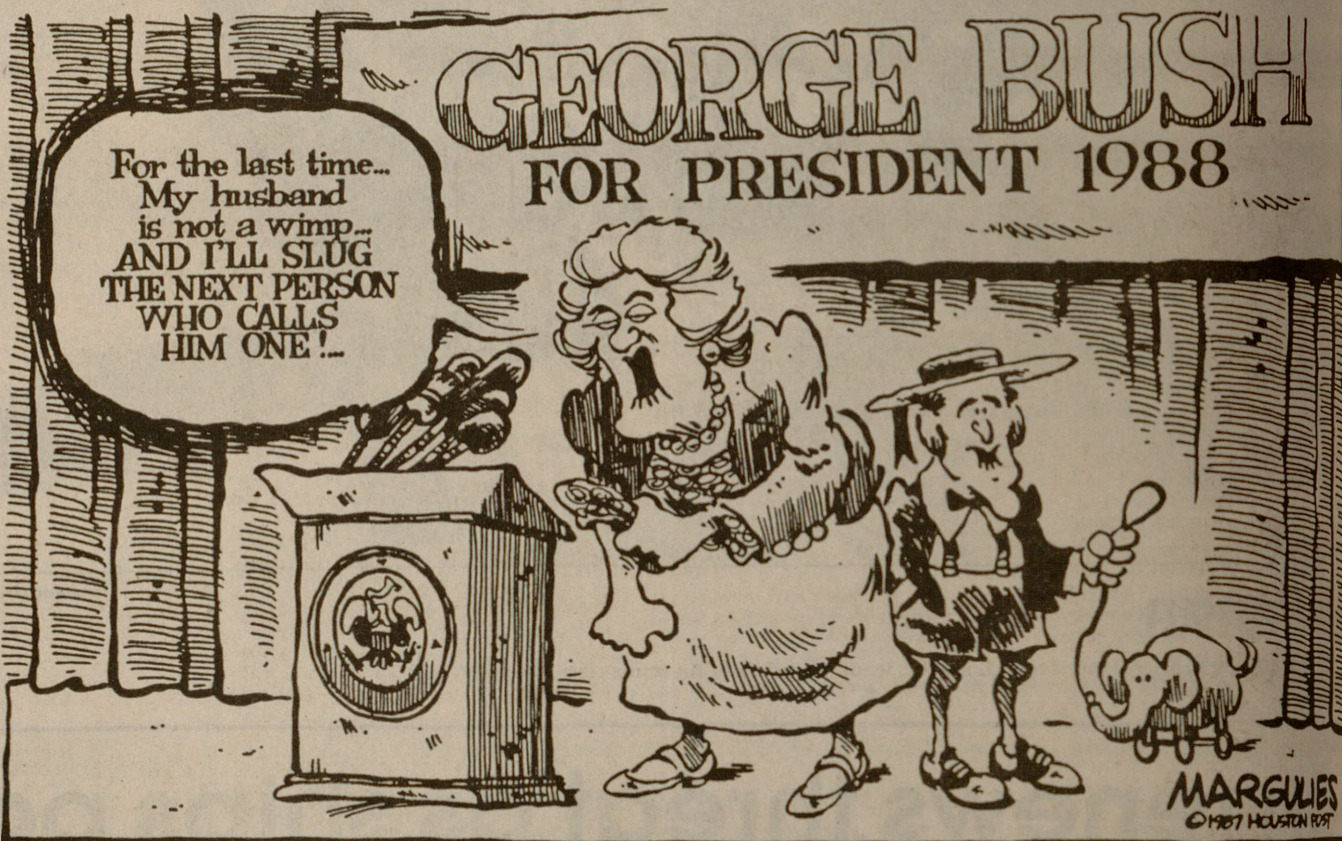
I learned a valuable lesson. I wish it hadn't taken death to make me learn it.

Every person has a responsibility that extends beyond not driving drunk. It is important to stand up for your beliefs even under real or imagined peer pressure. Your decision on how to

act may be with you for the rest of your life. It could save or destroy a friend's life.

I had the opportunity to make the same decision again about the concert. I had a second chance, and I made the right choice. Better late than never.

D.A. Jensen is a senior journalism major and a columnist for The Battalion.



It's time to confess: My sins keep me out of presidential race

There used to be the belief in this country that "every little boy has a chance to grow up to be president."



Lewis Grizzard

What we really meant back then was every child had a chance to grow up to be president, but back then, how were we to know little girls would someday care about anything but a degree in home economics and a husband with a hairy chest?

What else we didn't know is that presidential politics would become a steady exercise in muckraking, and when a little boy or little girl grew up and tried to be president, somebody would dig each and every wart out of their past.

We know what happened to Gary Hart and Joe Biden and their presidential bids. We found out Hart fooled around with the ladies and Biden fooled around with the truth.

Now, we come to Republican candidate Pat Robertson, the evangelist. Turns out, according to the *Wall Street Journal*, Robertson gambled, drank, and caroused his way through college, and when he married his wife, she was already seven months pregnant.

I gave up on the hope of this little boy ever growing up to be president a long time ago. Actually, I don't want to be president.

Regardless of that, however, I feel the compelling need to go ahead and reveal the sordid shortcomings of my past before somebody else, for whatever reasons, might start digging through it.

Who knows? I might replace Pat

Sajak on "Wheel of Fortune" one day. I might even become a television evangelist myself. It's inside work with no heavy lifting, and the pay is great.

I simply want to get the past off my chest before the leeches have a chance to latch hold of me.

Let's start at the beginning:

- When I was 6, my mother served liver one night, and I got rid of mine by feeding it to the dog under the table.

"Did you eat your liver or did you give it to the dog?" my mother asked.

- I lied and said I ate it. Worse, my dog was sick for weeks from the liver and died.

- When I was 11, I bought some dirty pictures from a friend at school. Every guy did that, I suppose — but I still have mine.

- When I was 14, I tried to put my hand inside Kathy Sue Loudermilk's sweater.

I wasn't successful, however. There wasn't room for anything else inside of Kathy Sue's sweater.

- When I was 17, I cheated on a history exam. I couldn't remember Millard Fillmore's first name.

- When I was 27, I folded, mutilated and spindled a computer card.

- When I was 35, I said to somebody, "It takes one to know one." I stole that from Alvin Bates, who used to say the same thing back in high school.

- Last year, when I was 40, I said, "What this country needs on the Supreme Court is a jurist like Robert Bork."

There it is, and I feel a lot better now that it's all out in the open.

Meanwhile, did you hear one of the presidential candidates is gay?

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No concept of engineering

EDITOR:

After reading Brian Frederick's column of Oct. 20, it occurs to me that Mr. Frederick doesn't seem to have the slightest idea of what an engineering education consists of. Theory is essential, and an engineer who does not fully understand the system he or she is working with is a dangerous person indeed. There are no solutions manuals for unknown design problems, Mr. Frederick. A person who tries to go through an engineering program by just learning to "plug those numbers into the proper sequence of formulas" will end up transferring to something less rigorous, such as liberal arts. Please, Mr. Frederick, stick to subjects you know something about.

Kevin Walters '88

A&M doesn't need fraternities

EDITOR:

Since it appears to be that time of year when everyone feels he knows what's wrong with A&M, I am obligated to add my two cents' worth. In this day and age, when bonfire has become an environmental hazard, grody stories are as offensive as crude religious jokes, and a simple "howdy" is as rare as a Sbis dinner steak, another monster has reared its ugly head here at A&M.

I hear that fraternities and sororities are on the rise here at A&M. My main question: What good are they if they don't serve both the individual and the school? I have yet to see a fraternity or sorority at bonfire cut, although I have seen them have cute little bike races early on weekend mornings. I know that many of these events raise money for worthy charities, but how come I never hear of them doing anything for the University? I'm all in favor of service fraternities and the work they do, but I do have a problem with frat daddies who spend all their time matching socks at the Zephyr Club.

Slowly, this great University is becoming a lot like our friend down the road, t.u. In a few years, Midnight Yell Practice will be replaced by "harmless" frat parties, and bonfire will be reduced to the burning of popsicle sticks on fraternity row. So I make one last plea to the loyal Ags who have yet to resign themselves to wearing letters on the chest and bows in their hair: Keep the tradition alive! No

Mail Call

frats — since the beginning.
Matt Flanagan '90

Tired of fraternity-bashing

EDITOR:

While standing with parents and friends in the Aggie section at the Baylor game, we witnessed an incident which caused us to question the true spirit of Aggieland. As the captains of the two teams converged in the middle of the field it was announced that the game ball was being presented by members of a fraternity who had biked the game ball more than 100 miles from Kyle Field to Baylor Stadium for the American Heart Association.

Much to our surprise and embarrassment, a wave of hissing swept through the Aggie section when the word "fraternity" was mentioned. As we looked around to see who was participating in this abortion of Aggie tradition, we saw one of our symbols of Aggie spirit — our illustrious yell leaders — blindly leading the horse's laugh.

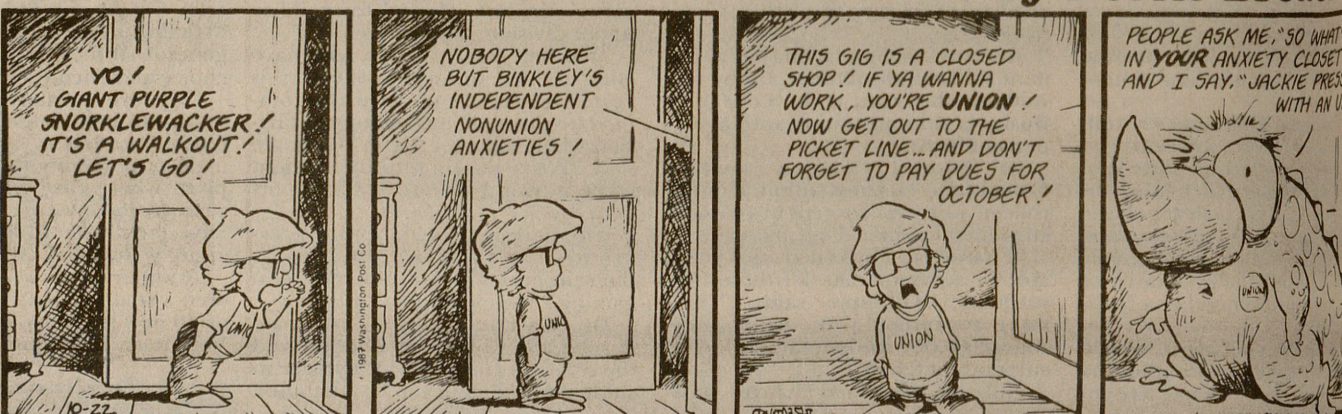
As Texas A&M has expanded to meet the needs of more and more students, it has attracted a diverse group of people with differing opinions and values. However, it is our belief that most of these students were drawn to this institution, at least in part, by the so-called Spirit of Aggieland and its traditions. Believe it or not, this includes Aggies who have elected to become members of Greek organizations. Events such as biking the game ball for a worthy cause seem to prove that these organizations are indeed valuable assets to Texas A&M and not the anti-tradition liabilities some closed-minded individuals have stereotyped them to be. So the next time you see the mascot of our school bettered by any organization, kindly give it the support and respect that "Good Ags" give all Ags. Weren't we taught in Fish Camp and at yell practice that Aggies don't hiss at Aggies? You tell us who were the "Good Ags" at the Baylor game.

David Monk '89
accompanied by two signatures

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BLOOM COUNTY

by Berke Breathed



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