

Opinion

Meeting the challenge of adversity head-on

When I was in kindergarten, our teacher brought a chrysalis to class. For several weeks, we watched the shiny green case, anxiously waiting for the butterfly to emerge.



Brian Frederick

Our teacher taught us about the life cycle of the butterfly. She warned us that we should not try to help the butterfly when it struggled to escape its green womb. If we were to assist it out of a sense of pity, it would never be able to fly.

The struggle was necessary to strengthen its wings in preparation for flight. Its maturity would come through adversity.

People are much like the butterfly. We become strong through the adversity of experience.

We subject our bodies to the hardship of aerobics and weight lifting to offset the effects of our sedentary lifestyles. We recognize that without the pain of exercise, we cannot receive the benefit of fitness.

This principle also holds in the other areas of our lives. It is said that true character is forged in the furnace of affliction. The trials of life serve to strengthen us mentally, morally, and spiritually if we are willing to face and overcome them. They will not benefit us if we flee. A lack of adversity in our lives cripples our mature development just as it does that of the butterfly.

Adversity further provides us with a challenge to face and a victory to win. There is little more satisfying in life than facing a challenge and overcoming it with one's own efforts.

College is replete with such challenges. We are faced with tough courses and tough professors who seemingly expect the impossible from us. We have a choice, either to remain weak by avoiding the challenge as many do or to profit by accepting it.

Though the effort be painful, the feeling resulting from successfully meeting the challenge more than compensates for the pain. Being handed the trappings of success without having expended the effort to earn them, however, gives us no real satisfaction.

Math 151H was a course that inflicted

great suffering upon me. I suspected that I should not have taken it as I had not had calculus or trigonometry in high school. But my placement scores gave me marginal admittance, and I did not want to be a semester behind in my engineering math sequence.

I soon found myself scoring, scoring a 47 on the first test as I struggled to learn calculus and trigonometry simultaneously. But I worked hard the rest of the semester and earned a C without a curve.

I am prouder of that C than I am of any of my many A's and scattered B's, for I had to give my all to earn it. The feeling of accomplishment that C gave me was much greater than that I received for many easy A's.

Perhaps even more than other challenges at Texas A&M, the Corps of Cadets develops character and gives a feeling of accomplishment. For years young men have made the commitment to join the Corps, voluntarily subjecting themselves to the motivational exercises, the harassment, and the early morning runs of which soft civilians complain.

This adversity toughens the cadet physically and mentally while uniting

him with his buddies. It makes a man of him and gives him the satisfaction of having achieved a difficult end.

Many who seemingly feel their manhood is threatened by the spectacle of boys becoming men in the Corps often malign it as an archaic organization that hinders the development of our University and abuses its members.

Yet that "abuse" is part of an experience that few cadets would trade. The "Corps experience" develops valuable maturity and character necessary for life but all too often lacking in college graduates. Cadets should be respected for taking challenges from which their critics flee.

Unfortunately, too many Americans today shun the challenges of life. We are flabby and complacent, afraid of anything that might disturb our comfort. We pay the price in personal and national weakness and miss out on the exhilaration of superlative achievement.

As students we avoid tough courses and instructors; as adults we avoid tough jobs, seeking rather the easiest work for the highest wage.

We do not rest there. Feeling guilty for the affluence we know we have not

earned, we seek to help those "less fortunate" than ourselves, voting them sorts of government assistance.

But in so doing, we murder their potential. We send them the message they are incapable of facing and overcoming the challenges of life on their own. We steal from them the joy of accomplishment, and the character development effected by adversity.

It is one thing to extend a hand to help a fellow overwhelmed by life to back on his feet. This we should do; it is altogether another matter to declare he is incapable of properly living out our help and thus justify holding his hand throughout his life. Our misguided compassion destroys his ability to soar free just as it does the butterfly.

Adversity is a fact of life. What causes us pain and suffering, it also affords us our greatest joys and triumphs and plays an essential part in our development. Lacking it, we are as impoverished as a butterfly without the use of his wings.

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

Mail Call

The air smells of hypocrisy

EDITOR:

This letter is in regard to the behavior of certain "gentlemen" at the bonfire site. The purpose of bonfire is to bring together the student body rather than dividing it against itself:

"The bonfire is exciting because it brings every kind of Aggie together to help with it. When you see what you've worked so hard on having this kind of effect on people it makes it all worth it and gives you a special feeling about A&M and what it stands for."

— J. D. Steward, 1987 *Aggieland*, page 32.

Doth not the air smell of hypocrisy? The years I worked on bonfire, this attitude toward the women did not exist. Maybe some of you "gentlemen" should have stayed in kindergarten.

Scott Kirkham '86

Say howdy first, dammit

EDITOR:

For all you Aggies who think that saying "howdy" is a thing of the past, let me tell you a little story. I was walking across campus, I mean all the way across campus, at 4:30 one afternoon and this is what happened: I was a "howdy" fool. I said "howdy" or "hi" to anything that moved. Without exception, everyone that I spoke to gave me a nod or a smile and returned my "howdy."

Aggies will always say "howdy." It's just that maybe you have to be the one to say it first. Gig 'em.

Patrick D. Brown '88

A&M ignores apartheid

EDITOR:

As president of Students Against Apartheid, I would like to articulate my appeal to Texas A&M regarding apartheid and divestment. This includes R. Smith, who promulgated his "devil" mentality in his Oct. 30 letter saying, "... how can we protest the government in South Africa? It doesn't recognize the blacks as individuals having any rights, so no human rights are being violated..."

Apartheid is a white devil construct in South Africa! Period! From a Christian perspective, the Bible indicates that Satan's goal is to kill, steal, and destroy (John 10:10). Since South Africa was colonized by whites, blacks have been systematically KILLED without any just cause! Furthermore, after apartheid was legalized in 1948, blacks' rights to own land were severed. Remember, blacks dwelled in South Africa centuries before whites knew it existed. Hence, apartheid has STOLEN real estate from the original black inhabitants. Thirdly, black males in South Africa are under duress to work nearly 365 days per year in ignoble coal, diamond, and gold mines without seeing their family. Also, blacks receive low wages which cut production cost, resulting in accentuated return on foreign (particularly U.S.) investment. Hence, future investment is enhanced and apartheid grows!

Renowned institutions such as Harvard, Yale and the University of Houston have divested (a PROVEN economic strategy that will crumble apartheid). Texas A&M has not. WHY?

W. Collins '87

Learn to spell

EDITOR:

It figures. You finally carry through with a vow to write to the editor of a newspaper. You even go so far as to type it because your handwriting is illegible. And what do they do? They misspell your name! My last name is not Turner, Taylor, Tamer or any other corruption of it. It is T-A-N-N-E-R! As in one who tans leather. One's name is a very important part of one's self-identity. Please do your utmost to get names correct.

Nancy Tanner '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.

The Battalion

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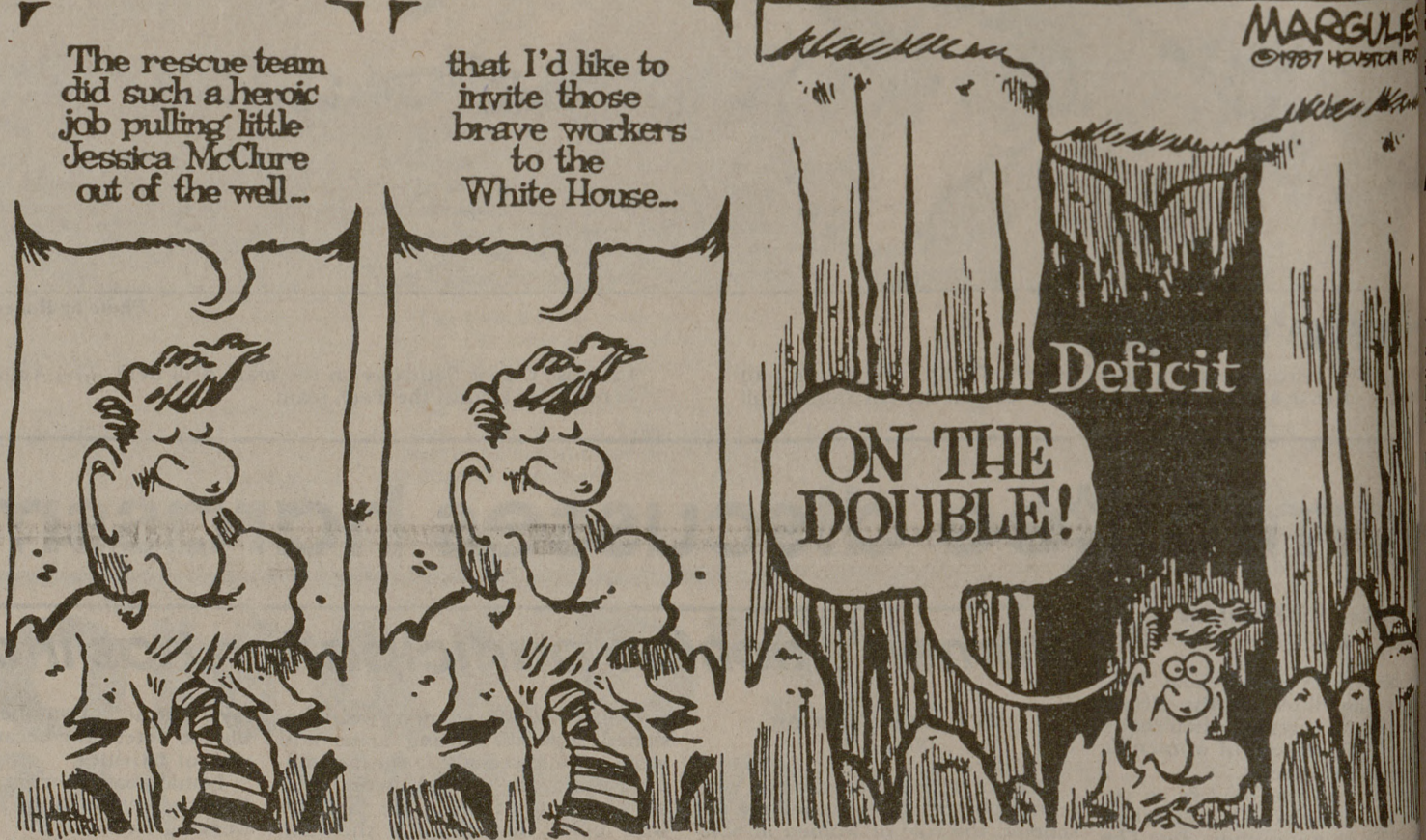
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A good 'ol boy beer drinker finds nonalcoholic stuff isn't bad

I've been a beer drinker for many years. I especially like beer when I am hot and very thirsty.



Lewis Grizzard

It goes down so smoothly under those conditions. It quenches the thirst and then finds a nice warm spot in the belly.

The more beer I drink, the more intelligent, funny and good-looking I become.

I used to think I could drive an automobile better when I had had several beers. I don't think that anymore, thank God.

I don't have any particular beer that is my favorite. If it's cold and runs downhill, I'll drink it. I also will go to great lengths to find beer when there isn't any that is readily available.

I once attended a cocktail party hosted by The New Yorker magazine. The New Yorker is a very sophisticated

magazine that carries articles I never quite understand. There was no beer at The New Yorker's cocktail party. They had white wine and bottled water, which is what very sophisticated people drink these days.

I left the cocktail party, walked across the street to a convenience store, bought a six-pack and brought it back with me.

The bartender was nice enough to put the beer on ice. After I'd had three or four of my beers, I began talking to the very sophisticated people around me, and said aloud, "I have no idea what you're writing about in The New Yorker, but I love your cartoons."

Everybody thought I was intelligent, funny and good-looking. I took a cab back to my hotel after I had finished my six-pack.

I bring all this up to establish the premise that I dearly love beer and it has been an integral part of my life for some time.

Given that, it may be a surprise to you, like it was to me, that when I tried the new non-alcoholic beer recently, I really liked it.

I don't want this to be a commercial,

so I'm going to mention the name of a new product just once, Kalibur.

A man who works for the company that makes the non-alcoholic beer said, "We hope designated drivers will drink it."

"Drinking is mostly a social thing anyway, and this is a great substitute when you're at a bar or a party, and you know you have to drive home."

A friend of mine who is a bigger beer drinker than I am also tried the new product. He tried it six or seven times.

"This is great," he said. "I've had this beer and I can still talk and walk and I won't kill anybody driving home."

"Another thing," said the man from the company, "is if you'll mix in one ours between regular beers, you can drink a lot of beer and not become so intoxicated."

I'm not going to lie to you. I'm going to drink my beer. But the non-alcoholic route is out there now, and there are times I think I'll take it.

I don't have to be intelligent, funny and good-looking all the time.

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BLOOM COUNTY

by Berke Breathed

