

# Mail Call

*Editor's Note: This is no ordinary Mail Call. These letters are written to you from editors, as opposed to from you to editors. Thoroughly confused? Good, then read on to find how we feel about you.*

## My Dearest Readers Who Don't Always Read:

Yes, it's me — I'm the "Editor" in all of your "Letters to the Editor." Yes, I'm at whom you direct most of your complaints and occasional compliments — that's me. I'm the one who's supposedly held ultimately responsible for various *Battalion* blunders, both real and only in your imaginations.

Now it's my turn. Heh, heh.

I've learned a lot over the past couple of years while working on the paper, and just as you've all formed an opinion about *The Batt* over the years, I've formed my own opinions about you based on your letters, phone calls, conversations and random rumors that just happen to get back to the newsroom.

To get to the point, I'm convinced that most of you don't *really* read *The Battalion*. Sure, you may casually pick one up in the MSC in hopes that someone will see you and think you're interested in what's going on in the world and on campus, but after you skim Mail Call, check out the comics and rip out the coupons, you drop it on the sidewalk. Don't deny it — I've seen you do it. OK, maybe some of you save the TV logs in *At Ease*, but you don't *really* read the newspaper.

That's fine with me and my staff. There was a sad time not long ago when I, too, could claim that I'd never read a *Battalion* from cover to cover, or any newspaper for that matter. Back then, my bird Nicholas's cage was religiously lined with the stuff without a single reading or a second thought.

The moral of my story? Don't complain about what you don't understand. I'm not encouraging you to just forget about the mistakes I openly admit we make. We want to hear about them, we want to correct them. But you simply can't make glaringly ignorant generalizations about something you cut the coupons out of and pitch in the wind.

Although few in number, we do hear legitimate complaints. But they are complaints from those who have obviously taken the time to read *The Battalion* on a regular basis. Not just the letters, not just the coupons — the *whole* paper.

On several readings, a regular reader should discover that we're really not young communists plotting to overthrow Texas A&M and all it stands for. We don't print stories to upset people. We don't hate traditions and we don't ignore them when they happen, nor do we ignore your favorite event just because we don't like it or you. And we aren't overlooking campus events, it's just important to remember that campus events include much more than just bonfire, elephant walk and events that occur every semester and will occur every semester until eternity. We all know about those anyway. Take a second look. *The Battalion* is full of campus events. But you won't find them all in one issue.

We do encourage different ideas, and we do welcome change.

There is, as they say, a method to what you see as our madness. We're college students just like you. Here to learn from our mistakes and have a good time doing it. Although we do think alike on some things, we're all individuals with a lot of our own — very different — opinions.

Relax. We're not out to get you — we're here to entertain, enlighten and inform you.

So think about how much you really know about us before you make that next snide remark about *The Battalion*. I won't be around to hear it, but I'd like to spare my friends and future *Batt* staffers.

AND READ THE PAPER BEFORE YOU COMPLAIN.

Later. It's been fun.

**Sondra Pickard, Batt Editor-For-One-More-Day.**

Dear Readers:

As a rule, y'all have been pretty nice to me when you dropped by *The Battalion* or called the newsroom during my stint as managing editor. If there are any suggestions I could pass on to y'all when calling or coming up here to the newsroom to talk to us, it would be to remember that we are human, too. Unfortunately, when we make mistakes, it's much more obvious to everyone.

If you do have a complaint about a story, remember this: Kind words are much more effective when voicing complaints than are harsh ones. When an angry person vents his complaint to us, it only results in another person getting mad, and that's not very helpful in resolving a problem. We listen a lot closer to people when they're calm and rational.

I'm half Osage Indian, and I live part of my life based on an Indian saying: Don't judge a man until you've walked a moon in his moccasins. Treat people — especially journalists — the way you want to be treated.

One final word: Take it easy — or take it any way you can. It's been fun working for y'all.

Respectfully yours,

**John Jarvis, Managing Editor**

Dear Readers:

My desk at the *Battalion* office is near the front door, so I usually end up dealing with various and random people who wander up the stairs of the Reed McDonald Building and into my life to cause me stress.

"Is this where you get student directories?" I hear as I look up from my work.

"No," I say. "It's across the hall, in the Journalism Department office."

"Is this where you place a classified ad?" the next person says.

"No," I say. "It's across the hall, in the Journalism Department office."

"Is this where you get mail subscriptions to *The Battalion*?" asks the third person who has invaded my working area within five minutes.

"No," I say. "It's across the hall, in the Journalism Department office."

I'm amused by the people who march resolutely into the office and announce to the world at large that they have a Letter to the Editor. (That's a capitalized "Letter to the Editor," mind you, not just a lowercase "letter to the editor.") There's a distinct tone difference.) Relax, people. It's no big deal. Your letter will get printed — as long as it follows our letters policy and can be verified, etc. — but that will be explained by Sue Krenek, our Opinion Page Editor.

I don't really mind dealing with these people. Well, not much. I can handle honest questions, even though I have stories to edit, assignments to write, phones to answer and staff writers to harass.

But my biggest pet peeve is the people who venture a few steps into the bustling *Batt* office, stand directly in front of the large, clearly labeled "What's Up" box — which has, on top of it, a large pile of "What's Up" forms and directions as to their use — and inquire innocently, "How do I put something in 'What's Up'?"

Aaaaauuuugh!

Patently yours,

**Amy Couvillon, Assistant City Editor**

Dear Readers:

Hi. I'm one of those other overworked, underpaid, behind-the-scenes, *Battalion* workers. I'm supposed to be in charge of finding spaces for the stories city desk so graciously provides me with (usually 10 stories for a 16-page paper and 100 stories for an eight-page paper). I'm also the one who gets to see all the strange, convoluted and double-entendre headlines that DON'T end up in the paper. But I've also become what amounts to a late-night secretary.

You know, answering all those calls from people who want to get something in the "What's Up" column for tomorrow, who want to put an ad in the paper for tomorrow (and the news department is COMPLETELY separate from the advertising department, by the way) or who want to get things changed that already have been verified and checked put in the paper tomorrow.

And most of the time I'm fairly good about answering that deadly newsroom ringing sound. I even ask, "May I help you?"

But I face up to 15 separate page deadlines a night, so when I find myself missing two deadlines, about to miss a third and with no hope of ever catching up, I may be a bit sharp with some of the above-type callers.

Please understand, I don't mean to be so mean; piling one pressure on top of another will tend to do that to a person. And I'm a student just like you are, although I only have to survive one more semester.

So the next time you call *The Batt* and hear a voice growl, "*Battalion*. May I help you?" just think about the way you get when you're facing four exams, two major projects and a 10-page English paper — all due tomorrow. And think of me. Your poor, harassed News Editor,

**Robbyn L. Lister**

Dear Readers:

I love you all. Really. Even those of you who wrote the 9.8798789987 x 10<sup>23</sup> letters we received about bonfire this semester. But I would be SOOO happy if you would follow the letters policy when you drop off those notes on my desk or into the mailbox. My days wouldn't be the same — and would be so much nicer — without the following phone call:

"Battalion."

"Yeah, I'm calling to see why my letter on off-track betting in the Himalayas didn't run."

"I remember that one. You didn't include your phone number, so we had no way to verify that you were really you and were really writing the letter."

"But how can you do that? It's censorship just to eliminate a letter because it doesn't have a phone number."

"No, it's part of our policy printed on the page EVERY DAY . . ."

And then there are those wonderful letters, beautifully written, well argued, with lots of great things to say about an event/column/article/idea. Unfortunately, they hit my desk a month after the event/column/article/idea first came to anyone's attention. Which leads to this phone call:

"Battalion."

"Yeah, I'm calling to see why my letter in response to Rock Goodag's letter didn't run."

"Well, mostly that's because your response came in a month after the letter ran, and no one even remembers that Rock Goodag wrote a letter, much less what he said."

"But how can you do that? It's censorship just to eliminate a letter because it didn't come in the next day."

"No, it's just that we try to run things that are timely. That's why we're a newspaper . . ."

AAUUUGGH!

Admittedly, it's not always that bad. I really enjoy my job until I've been here for 12 hours and have two tests and a paper due the next day and someone wants to yell at me for not running a letter that couldn't be verified. Then I think about how nice it'll be to turn my page over to a columnist-turned-editor who will need every bit of his sense of humor to deal with it. So when you call, just remember that though we try not to screw up, we're all students here and we're all juggling the same courses and stresses that you are. And though nobody has to know about it when you flunk a psych test, our journalistic learning experiences (i.e. mistakes) end up in print.

And put your PHONE NUMBER on your letters!!

Overworkedly yours,

**Sue Krenek, Opinion Page Editor**