

Opinion

The Battalion

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Summit-time blues

After months of touchy negotiations, Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev has arrived in Washington to sign a historic treaty on intermediate-range missiles.

The treaty has been welcomed, albeit grudgingly, by European leaders who fear the loss of nuclear weapons will weaken the strength of the United States in Western Europe. In the United States, many oppose the treaty for much the same reason. Their concern is legitimate — Soviet conventional forces far outnumber those of the United States and its allies — but this should not halt ratification of the treaty.

The United States' numerical weakness in Europe is a problem that should be addressed. But removing medium-range missiles from Europe, in light of the huge numbers of missiles remaining elsewhere, should not cause enough destabilization to make the conventional gap vital. Those who concentrate on conventional weapons may find that it is: a step, although small and imperfect, in the right direction.

— The Battalion Editorial Board

Aesop's fables hold lessons for adults

Aesop's fables have been part of the literary tradition of Western Civilization for more than 2,000 years. Our daily speech is full of references to them — "sour grapes" and "a bird in the hand" — a testimony to their lasting popularity. And we all know the stories of the boy who cried wolf and the tortoise and the hare.

The fables, full of captivating characters, appeal to children. But Aesop was a shrewd observer of human nature, and his fables are filled with valuable insights into human nature that only an adult can fully appreciate.

I immediately pounced on the copy of the fables I found on sale one day. As I perused it in my spare time, I discovered many little-known tales that should be better-known. Here are a few of those:

A man owned a spaniel and an ass. He often played with the dog, and whenever he dined out, he used to bring back something to give the dog when it came and fawned on him. The ass was jealous, and one day it ran up to its master and frisked around him. The master received a kick that made him so angry that he told his servants to drive the ass off with blows and tie it to its manger.

Moral: Nature has not endowed us all with the same powers. There are things that some of us cannot do.

A fox entered an actor's house and rummaged through all his belongings. Among other things, he found a mask representing a hobgoblin's head. He took it in his paws and said: "What a fine head! A pity it has no brain in it!"

Moral: Some men of impressive physical appearance are deficient in intellect.

Many of the fables have wide application to politics and foreign relations as well as to personal situations.

A wolf that had been made leader of the other wolves established a law that each of them should put into a pool everything he caught and share it equally with all the rest, so that they should not be driven by hunger to eat one another. But an ass came forward and said: "Out of the mind of the wolf has come a noble thought. But how is it, wolf, that you yourself laid up in your den the quarry you took yesterday? Put it in the common store and share it." This exposure shamed the wolf into annulling his laws.

Moral: The very men who pretend to legislate justly do not themselves abide by the laws which they enact and administer.

When the hares addressed a public meeting and claimed that all should have fair shares, the lions answered: "A good speech, Hairy-Feet, but it lacks claws and teeth such as we have."

A snake was trodden on by so many people that it went and complained to



Brian Frederick

Zeus. "If you had bitten the first man who trod on you," said Zeus, "the next one would have thought twice about doing it."

Moral: Those who stand up to a first assultant make others afraid of them.

Aesop often discusses how men are taught by example.

A lion, a donkey, and a fox formed a partnership and went hunting. When they had taken a quantity of game, the lion told the donkey to divide it. The donkey made three equal parts and bade the lion choose one — at which the lion leapt at him in a fury and devoured him. Then he told the fox to divide it. The fox put nearly all of it in one pile, leaving only a few trifles for himself. The lion asked who taught him to share things in that way. "What happened to the donkey?" he answered.

Moral: We learn wisdom by seeing the misfortunes of others.

A misfortune crab telling her son not to walk sideways or rub his sides against the wet rock. "All right, mother," he replied. "Since you want to teach me, walk straight yourself. I'll watch you and copy you."

Moral: Fault-finders ought to walk straight and live straight before they set about instructing others.

One winter's day a farmhand found a snake frozen stiff with the cold, and moved by compassion, he picked it up and put it in his bosom. But with the warmth its natural instinct returned, and it gave its benefactor a fatal bite. As he died he said: "I have got what I deserve for taking pity on an evil creature."

Moral: This story shows that even the greatest kindness cannot change a bad nature.

A common malaise among us today is the refusal to take responsibility for our actions.

A man who was tired after a long journey threw himself down on the edge of a well and went to sleep. He was in imminent danger of tumbling in, when Fortune appeared and woke him. "If you had fallen in, my friend," she said, "instead of blaming your own imprudence you would have blamed me."

Moral: Many people who meet with misfortune through their own fault put the blame on the gods.

I close with one of my favorites. I don't think it can be said Aesop lacked a sense of humor.

A man once read to Aesop some silly stuff that he had written, containing a lot of boastful talk about himself, and he was anxious to know what the old man thought of it. "I hope you don't think," he said, "that I am presumptuous or too cocksure of my ability." The man's wretched trash made Aesop sick. "I think you are quite right," he said, "to praise yourself. You will never find anyone to do it for you."

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



BEN SARGENT
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The trauma of 'two-bellies'

I made a major decision recently. I decided to buy myself a pair of blue jeans.

A 41-year-old man should not take on such a thing without first giving it a great deal of thought, which I thought I had done.



Lewis Grizzard

First, I asked myself if this was a first sign of middle-aged craziness.

Men do a lot of strange things when afflicted by that condition. They quit their jobs at the bank and go off somewhere to become woodcarvers or fishing guides.

Others leave their wives and buy themselves sports cars, while still other have hair transplants, date girls — girls whose first names end in "i" (Tami, Debbi, Staci) and wear gold neckchains.

But, I decided, none of that could be happening to me. I'm not going to quit my job, I have plenty of hair, and I took out Tami, Debbi, and Staci (one at a time) and none worked out. I had underdrawers older than all three.

Second, I had to ask myself if I could fit into a pair of jeans.

I stopped wearing jeans after I graduated from high school. I was quite thin in high school and my jeans fitted me perfectly.

I am by no means obese now, but I have noticed my body taking on a different and more rounded shape in an area that may be described as the navel and surrounding areas.

It's caused, I thought, by fallen chest arches.

But don't they advertise those jeans with a "skosh more room" for the mature jean-wearer?

I went to the department store and found the men's-wear department.

"How may I help you?" the salesman asked.

"I'd like a pair of jeans," I replied.

"And what waist size?" said the salesman, eyebrows raised.

"Thirty-four," I answered.

"Let's start at 36 and see where it takes us," the salesman suggested.

I couldn't get the zipper up all the way on the 36s.

The 38s fit OK in the back, but they

were still a bit too tight in the front and gave me the distinct look of being about three months pregnant.

I even tried on a pair of 40s. I have a rather small backside. There's enough room in the seat of that pair of jeans for a small company of Chinese soldiers to bivouac.

"I'm afraid, sir," said the salesman. "you have the two-bellies."

"The two-bellies?"

"Indeed, sir. What happens to some men who reach middle-age, they develop two distinct, shall we say, mid-sections?"

"They have one just above their belly-button and then another one below it. The two-bellies makes it almost impossible for one to fit snugly or comfortably in a pair of jeans, even with the extra 'skosh.'"

So, I had only been kidding myself when I thought I could still fit into blue jeans.

I'm a two-belly, and my blue jean days are sadly behind me.

"Could I interest you," the salesman asked, "in a fabric with more give? Say, polyester?"

God, the ravages of age.

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Mail Call

Bike towing is logical

EDITOR:

This letter is in response to Jeff Frank's letter of Dec. 3 concerning the police department's "illogical" bike policy.

After talking to Maj. Rick Flores, assistant director for special services, I decided that the program seems very logical. The practice of towing bikes was originally started to let handicapped individuals have easier access to campus buildings. Next, if there had been a fire, gas leak, or other disaster, evacuation of the building would have become more dangerous with bicycles blocking the exits. Finally, having the bikes park in the bicycle racks simply makes the campus look better.

Flores said there was ample parking within a few feet of each bike towed. It is just a matter of the inconvenience of not being able to park at the foot of the door.

As far as claiming your bike, describing it can be enough to reclaim it, although the free registration process is much easier. Even to have the serial number written down in your own records would be enough to reclaim it.

What if we just lifted all bicycle parking laws and let everyone park where he wants to? While we are at it, let us lift the parking laws for motorcycles and cars. Can you even begin to imagine?

Darby Tepera '89

Controversial coverage

EDITOR:

Last Wednesday night, while I was studying in the library, I noticed paramedics rushing through the hallway of the fourth floor with a stretcher. As any normal human being, I was curious to see what had happened, and being a photographer for the yearbook, I also brought along my camera. When I arrived where the paramedics were working, I found out that the injured student had had a seizure. I still proceeded to take a picture.

In the process, I offended many of the people who were watching. For those students who I offended, I apologize. But as a member of the press, I have an obligation to cover all events that occur on campus, whether they are controversial or not. As a professional, I also have an obligation to the public to cover the event in an ethical manner, and I believe that I did. In the picture, I made sure not to include the victim's face and tried to emphasize the attentiveness of the paramedics.

Again, to all of the people I offended, please accept my apologies with the understanding that I was acting as a journalist covering a story, and not as just another spectator with a camera.

Phelan M. Ebenhack '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.

BLOOM COUNTY

by Berke Breathed

