

Opinion

The curse of copiers and legal research

Making copies while doing legal research, I discovered last week, ranks right on up there with root canals as one of life's great joys.



Sue Krenk

Legal research itself is no fun. There are all these books. Rows and rows and rows of them. And they all look exactly alike, except for such exciting titles as Federal Reporter, Federal Reporter 2nd, Federal Supplement, etc.

And to make things worse, you can't find anything in them. Because the companies that print them had the ingenious idea to print the cases in the or-

der they were heard. This probably makes sense, because they don't have to print new ones all the time, but it also means you can't buy them without buying an equally large and obnoxious set of black and tan and red books that act as a guide to the other obnoxious black and tan and red books.

And they take up just as much room. So when you get tired of being confused by the rows and rows and rows of case books, just move down and down you can be confused by rows and rows and rows of books that are supposed to help you decipher the case books.

Of course, it's impossible for any normal human being to look anything up in these guides, because the topics are indexed in Lawyerese. Fluent English-speakers might as well give up. Or go to the next set of obnoxious black and tan and red books, called — I'm not kidding — Words and Phrases. Rows and rows and rows of them, all intended to take your logical guess at what stuff should be indexed under and tell you where, in fact, you need to look.

That did it. When you have to have a

book just to tell you what Legal Mumbo-Jumbo your subject is indexed under so you can look in the index so you can look up the cases — well, obviously the system was created by a sadistic law professor looking to make his students' lives a living hell.

But the fiend who created the legal research system paled in comparison to whoever's in charge of making sure the copiers in the library don't work. Because at 2:15 a.m., after finding the cases I wanted out of the obnoxious black and tan and red books, I went to look for a copier.

Struggling with six legal books, each of them taller than I am, I headed for the first floor to get change. The copiers were strewn with the debris of a hard night's copying, and the guy at the reserve desk advised me to get nickels because the copiers were eating everything else.

Great. So here I was with \$5 in nickels and six monstrously huge legal books, trying to find a copier. The one that was

working was in use, so I headed back to the fifth floor, thinking myself brilliant for avoiding the wait.

Back up the elevator, juggling nickels and books, I found the copiers on the fifth floor. You guessed it — dead. I went to the fourth floor. Dead. The third floor. Dead. Two. Dead. One. The guy using the machine had just broken it. Dead.

There was only one possibility left. With a lunatic gleam in our eyes, he and I said, "Sixth floor!" and headed off on the Quest for the Holy Xerox Machine. Visions of paper jams, used-up toner and used-up paper danced in my head. Copier error lights swam in front of my eyes. (It was, after all, getting quite late.)

The doors opened, and we saw it. The one working copier in the Sterling C. Evans library. It was a thrilling moment.

And then we saw the line. Back from the copier, around the tables, through the stacks. Okay, okay, so it was just one guy copying lots of pages. We sat down

to wait. And waited. And waited. Nervously we watched the level of blank paper shrink as he copied and copied and copied. I kept thinking how cheaply and quickly I could copy this stuff at Kinko's if I could just get it past the evil magnetic guards at the front of the library.

Finally it was my turn. I had six cases to copy. The line behind me began to grow. I made it through the first case 25 pages. And the second, 28 pages. The people in line began to growl. I hurled mental curses at the goofballs who refuse to have people to service the copiers at night.

Four cases left. Three. Two. As I started the last case, I knew they were getting ready to strike. Three pages left. Two. One.

The copier broke.

But I made it out of the library before they could catch me.

Sue Krenk is a senior journalism major and editor of The Battalion. She is in favor of sentencing all criminals to searching for working copiers in Sterling C. Evans.

Aggieness is contagious

I suppose the disease is catching. I hadn't thought it was, but I've accepted it now.

Rich Helland Guest Columnist

I got back into the office Friday just before lunch after spending the Thanksgiving holiday in College Station with my daughter, who attends Texas A&M.

I was talking to a co-worker about the Aggie and Thursday night's game that gave the Aggies their third straight Southwest Conference title and trip to the Cotton Bowl on New Year's Day. I mentioned that the hotel we were in seemed popular with a lot of older Aggies.

"Yeah, I bet there were a lot of former Aggies there," he said.

"There are no former Aggies," I told him without missing a beat.

"My God," he said, "it didn't take long for them to get to you."

I suppose not. For the uninitiated, people who attend other schools often say they "used to go" to a school. However, at A&M, once an Aggie, always an Aggie.

Even people who attend other schools recognize that. When a friend heard my daughter was going to A&M, he said "That's a shame. I mean, once you get out of anyway else, you're out, but you're stuck being an Aggie forever."

Given that he owns a lot of burnt orange, he meant that as an insult; Aggies, however, will recognize it for the compliment that it is.

Recently A&M has gotten attention for the quality of its football program and through the debate surrounding that quality. Other schools in Texas have implied that such quality goes hand-in-hand with large cash outlays, something the Aggies deny and the NCAA has yet to rule on.

But, my affection for A&M doesn't have much to do with football, though fall is the time of year when a good many of the traditions at the school seem to be in sharpest focus.

The traditions are what have become important to me. I tend to be old-fashioned. I grew up in a small town where not much has changed over the years after you scrape away the lacquer that passes for progress and growth.

I went away to college to a school founded in 1805, one where architects designing new buildings have to conform to the ones built 150 or more years ago. Tradition is important at that school and it's nice to go back and find some things unchanged.

We worship change these days. We move so often we lack a sense of place.

Many of us look back on our lives and see a shifting, drifting mass of shapes we can't quite put into focus.

Go to A&M, however, and you'll see things in focus. The Old Ags gathered in our hotel have seen a lot of change. When they were in school, prior to World War II, the campus was just a fraction of its present size. But, one thing hasn't changed. The traditions.

The members of the various classes at A&M today go through many exercises the Old Ags went through.

One Aggie, who has been a major success in his field and a confidant of presidents, was cited last week by a statue unveiled in his honor. He said at the ceremony "The university has been my rock."

We need rocks, if not an A&M, then at least something, somewhere.

We attended our first bonfire this week. The night before the A&M-Texas game, the midnight yell practice is moved up a few hours and held in a large field at the south end of the campus.

If the lighting of the bonfire is a tradition, the building of it is more of one. This year it took 5,500 logs and stood 50 feet high, counting the orange outhouse mounted on top of it. Cranes are brought in to hoist the logs, which are bound together by hand with wire.

The logs are stood on end and the result, seen at night against a dark sky, lit dimly by flashlights, is spooky. When the band comes in, headed by cadets with torches, and the torches are tossed onto the bonfire, it is an awesome scene.

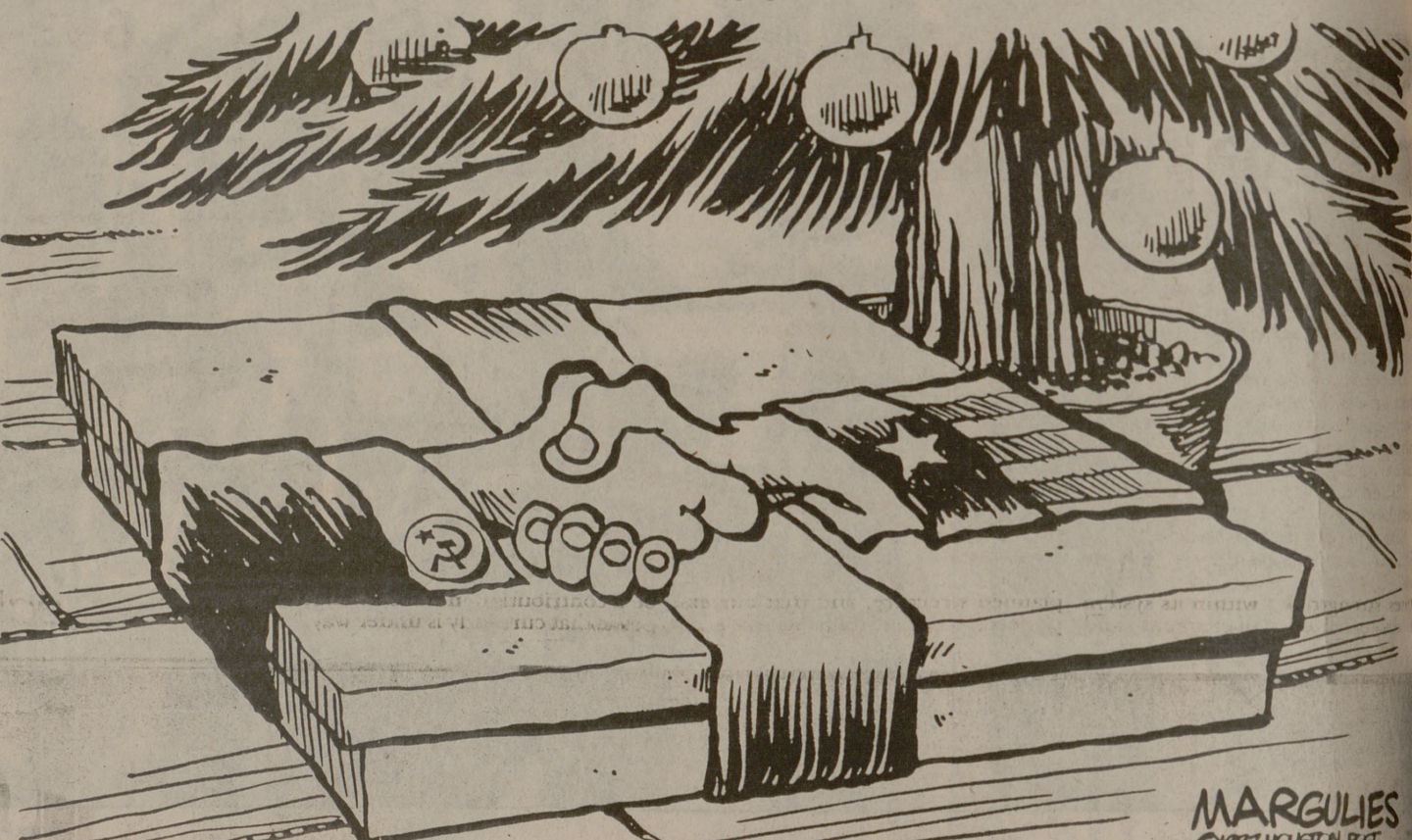
There were 45,000 people at the bonfire and yell practice. The day before, all the seniors had linked arms and walked throughout campus on the "elephant walk," symbolizing one of their last acts as seniors.

I know some folks consider such things corny. I did, some Longhorn fans in the mob did. But, I find them reassuring. It's nice to know that, 30 years from now, I can go back to A&M and find them, on the night before the Texas game, lighting a huge stack of logs.

It's nice to know that seniors will link arms, 50 years from now, and walk through campus as a group if, for no other reason, than it's always been done that way and some things just shouldn't change. If it ain't broke, don't fix it.

Some of our rootless children are going to grow up missing out on a lot of traditions, and that's a shame. To prevent that would be reason enough to send a kid to A&M in my book, even if the football team went 0-10.

Rich Helland is the editor of the Arlington Daily News.



Mail Call

True Christmas spirit

EDITOR:

We, the residents of Fourth Floor Aston Hall — South Wing, would like to express our deepest gratitude to those involved in the theft of our Christmas lights. The expense, both in time and money, involved in decorating our wing was to be enjoyed by all, not a select few. You really do exemplify not only the true meaning of Christmas, but also the reputation of a fellow Ag. Please come over to pick up the boxes which were left behind in your haste. After all, we would like the lights to be safely stored so they can be used next Christmas.

Edward Varela '88 Arthur Fulbright '90 wing representatives accompanied with 31 signatures

Ringless yet proud

EDITOR:

I am an Ag in need of some help. Sometime during the celebration of bonfire I lost my Aggie ring. My friends and I have searched every inch of Duncan field on our hands and knees and with metal detectors and shovels, only to come up empty-handed. I'm convinced it had to have been picked up by someone. I can offer \$50 for its return. The time and dedication it took for me to get it is more important than the money. Please contact me!

On a more positive note, the Fightin' Texas Aggie 12th Man was incredible during the t.u. game. I hope everyone is just as motivated to beat the hell outta Notre Dame in Dallas.

Chris Yancy '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.

Correction

In a Thursday guest column, Doug Baumann said The Battalion was incorrect in reporting that the Student Senate recommended eliminating emergency after-hour service at the A.P. Beutel Health Center.

Baumann, chairman of the Student Government Finance Committee, said the Senate proposal actually would allow the center to stay open, have nurses at the center and have a physician on call.

Only the funding for having a physician on location was denied, he said.

The Battalion based its report on the official budget submitted by the Student Government Finance Committee, which read:

"The Student Finance Committee unanimously recommends that the Beutel Health Center close between the hours of 12:00 midnight and 8:00 a.m. The service provided during these hours is not cost efficient.

1) A deduction of \$120,000, the approximate cost of operating during these eight night-time hours."

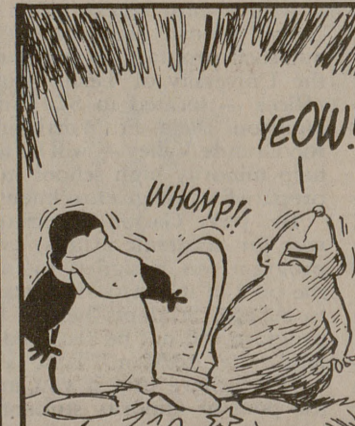
The Student Senate accepted the Finance Committee's recommendation. The Battalion report was not in error.

Baumann on Thursday told a Battalion representative that the official budget was "misworded" and did not represent the Senate's true intentions.

He said the administrative officials who approve the recommendations have been made aware that the Student Senate does not want to end night service at the health center.

Although no revised budget has been submitted to reflect the Senate's intentions, Baumann wanted to emphasize that the health center will remain open at night.

BLOOM COUNTY



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by Berke Breathed