

Opinion

Professors are the ones really in control

It's funny how much control our professors and instructors have over our futures — especially as we approach graduation. I am reminded of this as I listen to the woes of my friends who are sweating out graduation. I know firsthand just how strong a teacher's hold on you can be.



John MacDougall

My story begins a few years ago during the last semester of my senior year as a T-sip. I had been putting off taking a required course of the dubious title Microeconomic Theory for two and a half years. I knew I was in trouble my first day of class when I found out that our instructor, a young guy (I shall call him Dr. X), had gotten his Ph.D four years ago from Texas A&M. He was a self-admitted asshole, and as his students and I will attest, a damn good teacher — the kind of guy who promotes love/hate relationships with his students.

Dr. X subscribed to the John Houseman school of thought when it came to teaching economics. He felt that his job was to teach you, rather than to make

you like him. Either you came to class prepared or you faced a terrorizing flurry of questions. Dr. X was a quirky guy too. He absolutely detested yawning in his classroom. He made it clear to us at the beginning of the semester that any student caught yawning without covering his mouth was dead meat. "I don't want to look at the insides of yo' tonsils," he'd say with a long Southern drawl (I think he was from W. Virginia).

I managed to maintain a solid "B" average for most of the term and was happily looking forward to taking a job working for a newspaper in Boston after graduation. Four years of worrying about making the grade was drawing to a close. It was time for this bird to fly from his nest to financial freedom. Then my worst nightmare came true.

We were scheduled for a grueling two-hour nighttime test. I had studied diligently at home until about a half-hour before test time. I packed my calculator and pencils and headed off to class. When I got there the classroom was empty. My heart sunk. I then remembered that he had changed the classroom but I didn't recall the room number. For about 15 minutes I ran up and down the empty halls of the business building in search of my class. Not finding anything, I suddenly had the

revelation that I was in deep doo-doo. The University of Texas has about 500 classrooms scattered over 40 acres, so the likelihood of happening upon the right room was nil. So I decided to cut my losses.

My mind began to work like a personal injury lawyer on a sinking ship. To prove I made a sincere effort to take the test, I ran down to the police station to get an affidavit that I was there during test time. Then I rushed to a payphone, got my teacher's number from information and quickly dialed. No answer.

I went home in total despair. The next day I called his office early in the morning and told him my story. He didn't seem to believe it. He said he and his wife were home all night yesterday and they never got a phone call. He told me to talk to him after class in the afternoon. As I heard the terminating click on the other end of the line, I thought to myself "Maybe this is God's way of telling me I'm not living a clean life. Or maybe a mortal enemy is sticking pins in a voodoo doll with my likeness."

Whatever the case, I was in serious trouble. I regretted sending out graduation announcements to my relatives a week before, accepting a job or getting a new VISA card.

I went to class the next day feeling as if I would blow chunks on my high-tops any minute. About 60 students showed up (maybe word had gotten out that Dr. X was going to feed a student to the lions). The instructor opened up class by telling the students in a half-sarcastic tone what I had told him last night. Furthermore, he told them that he was home all night and never received a phone call, which didn't lend much credence to my story. To make matters worse, he reminded everyone that the class was held in the first floor of the business building. He suggested that whomever it was that missed the test (he didn't know me by face) should keep quiet while the class voted on what he should do with me.

The facts of the case were grossly slanted in favor of the prosecution. The prevalent sentiment of students was thumbs down. Some students commented that the whole problem was my own stupid fault, and I shouldn't be allowed to slide. A few kind souls spoke up. One guy said, "Look, the guy is about to graduate and he said he looked for the classroom and he said he tried to call you. Why don't you let him slide?" Yea!

The teacher ended the debate by declaring that he wasn't going to decide now but was inclined to give me a goose

egg (the course syllabus, which is also the law of last resort, unless the makeup would be given, stated that was a death in the family of a debilitating illness and plenty of warning. In ironic twist, he told class members he felt sorry in a way for the poor because he couldn't imagine the opening to a more unsympathetic teacher (he was a free-market type who had handouts).

After class I went to his office for tutoring. He asked me how I managed to get as far as I did in school being a bozo. I honestly didn't know what to say. I could have told him that I was an A+ student but that would really have set him off. After a moment's hesitation, he told me that, against his judgment, he was going to let me pass. Then he yelled "Get the hell out of my office."

I felt like a death row inmate the sentence is commuted as he's sent into an electric chair. Later that night I was sipping a longneck at the Wall Bar, I reflected on how my freedom really is.

John MacDougall is a graduate student in the MBA program and a columnist for The Battalion.

Letting the ladies go first is a strange thing to do

The elevator door opened and the tiresome ritual began.

Those of the male persuasion stepped slightly to the side and just stood there.

Those of the female persuasion leaned tentatively forward until they were sure we weren't going to move.

Finally, one of them bolted into the elevator, followed by the others. We went next. But after all the hesitating, the door began to close and one of us had to bang it back open to get aboard.

The elevator went down and at the first floor the door opened. The ritual was repeated. The males stood as if frozen until a female got off, followed by the others. Then the rest of us scrambled out before the door closed.

Why do men do it? Why do I do it? Why do we believe that we must let females get on and off elevators before we do?

It has been years since the historic first public bra-burning. Since then, women have risen to high public office, become major corporate executives and now work as equals in most professions and many trades.

True, many inequities remain. But even the most hard-nosed of feminists must concede that during the past two decades, great strides have been made. I mean, I know dozens of women who swear better than me.

Yet, we persist in the elevator ritual, the opening-the-door-for-them ritual, the first-in-the-cab ritual, the stand-up-when-they-get-to-the-restaurant-table ritual, the help-them-on-with-their-coat ritual, the shake-hands-only-if-they-offer-to-first ritual, and many others.

Why shouldn't I get on or off the elevator first if I'm closest to the door. It would be more orderly and result in less emotional stress brought on by those moments of indecision.

Even worse, on the few occasions that I've done it — bolting on or off the elevator with a devil-may-care attitude — why do I immediately feel guilty and embarrassed, fearing that the females behind me are thinking: "What a boor."

Seeking answers to these questions, I asked a female executive why women expect to get on and off elevators first.



Mike Royko

"We don't expect it," she snapped. "In fact, it infuriates me."

"Then why do you do it?"

"We don't do it. You do it. It's your fault. You stand there like bunch of wimps. So if we don't break the logjam and get off first, we'll be riding the damn thing all day."

You mean you don't see this as being a courtesy required of men?"

"Of course not. Who the hell cares who gets off an elevator first, unless it's on fire. And I don't need a man to open a door for me or help me on with my coat. I've been opening doors and putting on my own clothes as long as they have. And when they jump up at a restaurant table, one of them usually hits the table with his leg and slops water all over the place."

Then why do we do these things? "How do I know? You're the ones who are doing it. We wish you'd stop."

You won't think we're boors?"

"Of course not. If anything, we'll respect you for treating us as equals and being enlightened."

I am always seeking enlightenment in this foggy world. But the question still remained: Why do we do it?

So I put that question to the eminent psychiatrist, Dr. I.M. Kooky.

"If I may summarize your question about elevators and doors and cars," he said, "what you seem to be asking me is why do we continue to abide by the outmoded tradition of 'ladies first,' is that not correct?"

Yes. Is it because we are subconsciously patronizing them, treating them as weaker or lesser creatures?"

"Possibly. But I believe that the primary psychological reason for our behavior is that by letting them go first, we get a real good look at their legs and their bottoms. I'm a leg and bottom guy, you know. And boy, oh, boy, when you open a car door to let one of them out, you can sometimes get a glimpse of thigh."

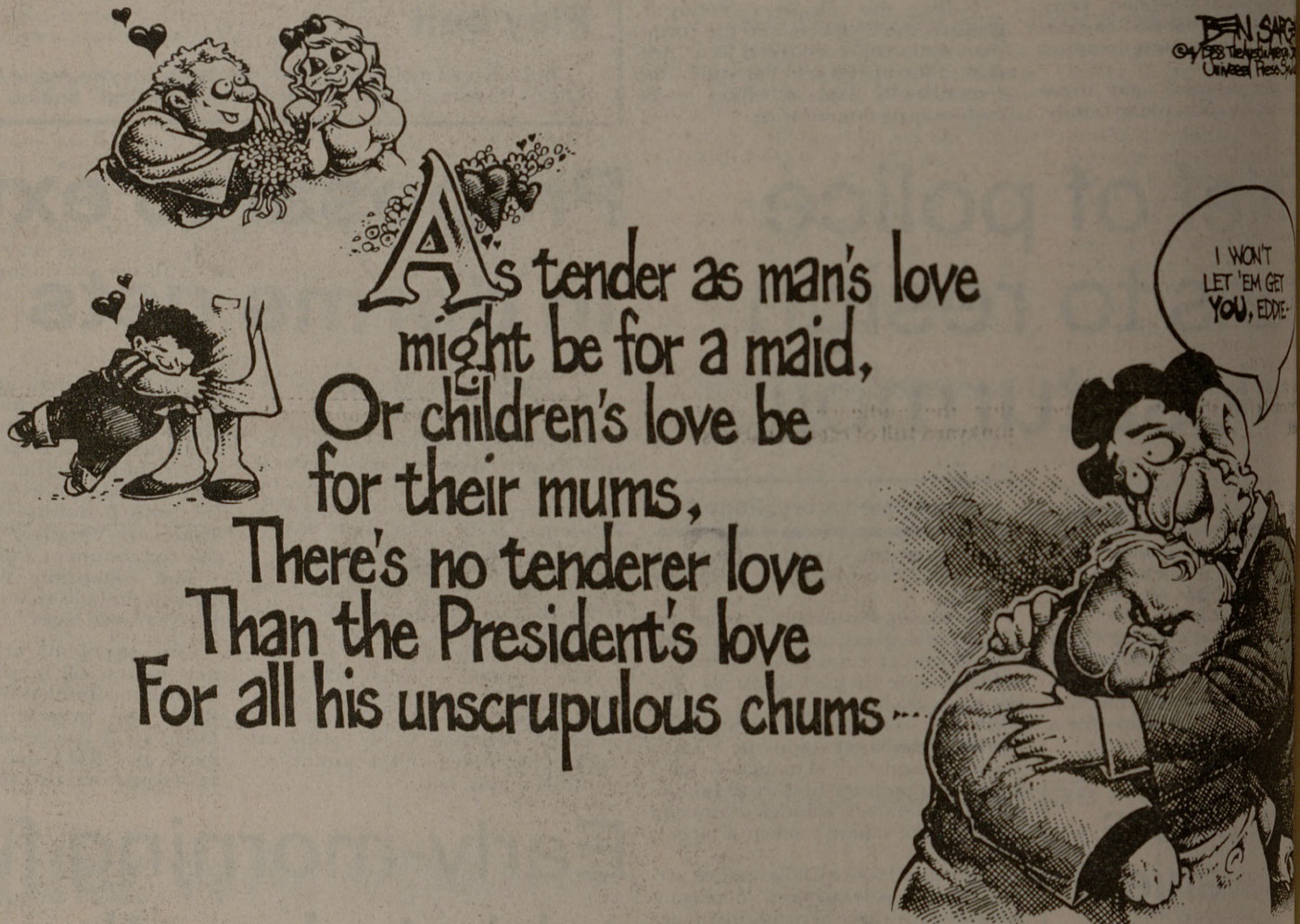
That's why we do it, in order to gawk and leer?

"I don't know about you, but that's why I do it. I always help them on with their coats because it gives me a chance to get a sniff of their perfume. A real turn-on. I'll tell you."

Doctor, I am shocked and disgusted.

"You are? Then I'll tell you something. You ought to go see a psychiatrist."

Copyright 1987, Tribune Media Services, Inc.



Mail Call

Sick of us versus us

EDITOR,

I'd like to know just who the hell Mike Freeman thinks he is. How many games did you say you went to? I too have been to a good number of A&M's home baseball games, and I've seen members of the corps all over this place. Maybe not as an entire unit and maybe not during the week, but they have been there. A simple explanation for this? They are busy both during the week and on the weekend (as are many other Aggies who might have shown up for the rare occasion of playing the No. 1 ranked team with a good chance of beating it). In spite of the busy schedule members of the corps face every day, the entire corps shows up for a very important game for the baseball team to give its support.

What happens? The Corps is criticized for it. This leads me to ask a simple question: why do students criticize the Corps of Cadets? Maybe non-corps members don't realize how hard it is to be a part of the corps and are jealous of the attention the corps gets. Maybe the existence of the corps hurts the "macho-ness" of non-corps, striking up more jealousy. Regardless of this, I would like an explanation for the criticism of a group that brings attention to our university and sets us apart from other universities. An organization consisting of the Fightin' Texas Aggie Band, the Ross Volunteers, Parson's Mounted Cavalry, and other fine groups.

However, the main reason I am writing is to say that I am tired non-Aggies attacking Aggies. No matter who the Corps of Cadets, SAA, The Battalion staff members, anyone else. Opinions are great because the increase awareness of the world around us. Competitive rivalry is great because it forces us to do our best. Attacking the corps for supporting the baseball team and vandalizing the SAA shack do not fit into these categories.

Ags, it's time for some school spirit. I'd like to be first to apologize for attacking another Aggie. I'm sure that I had to use your letter as an example Mike. No offense.

Beat the hell outta t.u.!!!

(Not each other!)

Russell H. Johnston '91

Letters to the editor should not exceed 300 words in length. The editor 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 a classification, address and telephone number of the writer.

The Battalion

(USPS 045 360)

Member of Texas Press Association
Southwest Journalism Society

The Battalion Editorial Board

- Sue Krenek, Editor
- Daniel A. LaBry, Managing Editor
- Mark Nair, Opinion Page Editor
- Amy Couvillon, City Editor
- Robbyn L. Lister and Becky Weisenfels, News Writers
- Lloyd Brumfield, Sports Editor
- Jay Janner, Photo Editor

Editorial Policy

The Battalion is a non-profit, self-supporting newspaper operated as a community service to Texas A&M and Bryan-College Station.

Opinions expressed in The Battalion are those of the editorial board or the author, and do not necessarily represent the opinions of Texas A&M administrators, faculty or the Board of Regents.

The Battalion also serves as a laboratory newspaper for students in reporting, editing and photography classes within the Department of Journalism.

The Battalion is published Monday through Friday during Texas A&M regular semesters, except for holiday and examination periods.

Mail subscriptions are \$17.44 per semester, \$34.62 per school year and \$36.44 per full year. Advertising rates furnished on request.

Our address: The Battalion, 230 Reed McDonald, Texas A&M University, College Station, TX 77843-1111. Second class postage paid at College Station, TX 77843.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to The Battalion, 216 Reed McDonald, Texas A&M University, College Station TX 77843-4111.

BLOOM COUNTY

