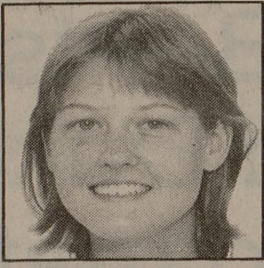


# Opinion

## Alcohol is an insidious part of our drug problem

Much ado has rightfully been made concerning the problem of drug abuse in our society. But while the police bust crack houses, they ignore the liquor stores that cause much more damage. I have known the joy of a beer after a hard day's work. I've eaten crackers and shared a pitcher in The Chicken. My goal in this column is not to suggest that anyone's liquor be taken away. I just want to make the point that it is ironic that we have a war on drugs going on, while at the same time our society condones and even encourages the use and abuse of alcohol.



Jill Webb

It is hard to watch any sporting event without it being interrupted by beer or wine cooler commercials. Some of the most popular actors, Bruce Willis and Mark Harmon, peddle the beverages while Phil Collins and Eric Clapton sing the catchy jingles. Even an obnoxious dog is popular because he drinks the right beer. These commercials have a common message. Want a date? Need excitement? Romance? Male bonding? Well, then drink the correct brand of beer and all the world is yours! The advertisers want us to believe that alcohol is nothing like those illegal drugs that make people beat their spouse and children, commit crimes and lose their mind. Alcohol is not a drug. No, it is only a mood enhancer say the commercials.

Our society has created an aura about alcohol. Dim lights and the bottle of wine starting a romantic evening. Whiskey in a tin cup around a campfire.

Finding a smoky bar to go to with your broken heart. Alcohol is part of the initiation rights in many social organizations. It is entrenched in things in that our society sees as positive events.

Some people sit around their living rooms talking about "those people" who use drugs, while they sip on their beer, or pour another scotch. Substance abuse is not a "we — they" issue. Even if the human cost is ignored, the financial consequences of substance abuse show how serious a problem it is for all of us. Alcohol abuse is a major problem. But, because alcohol is legal, many people drink (80% of college students), and a lot of money is made from it, it is seen as not as dangerous as other drugs. The facts give a different view.

Illegal drug abuse costs the United States \$32 billion in lost productivity every year. Alcohol costs the U.S. \$65 billion a year in lost productivity. Add to that the drunk drivers, the alcohol related crimes, the human misery and waste of life. The logical thing to do would be to wage a war on alcohol. But our society won't do that because that would be admitting that it isn't a "they" problem. Enough of us drink so that we would have to look at ourselves, and that is not a pleasant thing to do. It is easy to create programs to try to help solve problems of other people, but when the people in our society have to look at their own behavior, and how it is contributing to the problem of alcoholism, they are understandably scared.

Every time a beer commercial using young people's heroes airs on MTV, the idea that drinking is cool is reinforced in a young person's mind. As long as drinking is held in high esteem, as a symbol of adulthood, then society will continue to distort and ignore the alcohol-caused devastation around us. Alcohol use could be compared to cigarettes.



C. Wells / Batt 88

It has been said that if the harm cigarettes did was shown on the outside then no one would smoke. People started smoking because it was the cool thing to do. Then people became educated and could see enough death around them and it was not cool, it was stupid. There is nothing wrong with drinking in moderation. But it should not be glamorized. It should not be a symbol of adulthood. Drunkenness is not a positive state. As a responsible society we need to start sending that message to children and the great number of adults who do not seem to have grasped that fact.

Just because something is socially acceptable does not mean that it is morally correct. As time goes on we become ashamed at the prevalence and reverence of alcohol in our society, as we are now beginning to shake our heads over the vast number of people who used to smoke.

Jill Webb is a senior secondary education major and columnist for The Battalion.

### Mail Call

Let your fingers do the walking

EDITOR:

I look to the Bible (just one book) for a lot of my answers (I use the back of the textbook for odd numbered problems, yet I consider myself to be extremely patriotic; I do not see any irony in this conception. National freedom through military victory and individual freedom through the exercise of volition are two major doctrines found in the Bible.

People like Jefferson and Hamilton, who died generations ago, decided they wanted freedom for the United States. Men and women who died recently in places like the Ardennes, Guadalcanal, Saigon, and Beirut also opted for freedom. I stand by their decisions, and I believe we have freedom (democracy?) today because of those decisions.

Why was the Bible written in Hebrew and Greek (and not English...)? Lots of reasons. Koine Greek is far superior to any language for written expression of ideas. The human authors spoke and thought in Hebrew and/or Greek. God could have chosen to "publish" the Bible at any time. If God is infallible, we must conclude that He chose the right time and thus the right languages.

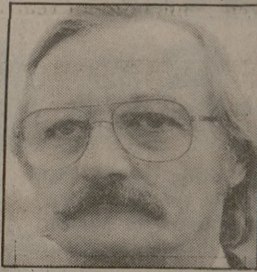
Millions have been slaughtered in the name of God, but I don't believe that anything any one of us does makes God any happier, sadder, sicker or healthier than He has always been. Anthropopathisms are great training aids, but they usually misrepresent the essence of God.

Ms. Webb was within her rights to write her column of July 6; I find it almost ludicrous that she ran roughshod over writings which many hold sacred. The column would have been more appropriate at a meeting of a certain recognized student organization than in the campus-wide newspaper. Has *The Battalion* abandoned rational journalism in favor of emotional content?

Craig E. Groeschel '91

## Shooting down the Iranian airplane was a serious American mistake

Disasters like the shooting down of Iran Air Flight 655 are invariably shrouded in ambiguity and first reports are always wrong. They'll be weeks and months in unraveling the details, after which experts will argue about them for years. Anybody who would resume to comment on the matter at this point is a damn fool. Here goes:



Donald Kaul

President Reagan has called the incident "an understandable accident." Nonsense. How understandable it was remains to be seen but it was no accident; it lacks the necessary element of chance. We shot down that plane on purpose. The fact that the action had unintended and unwelcome results (the murder of 290 men, women and children) does not make it an accident. It was, to indulge in exquisite understatement, a mistake.

Mistakes are worse than accidents and at the very least demand apologies, but Mr. Reagan wasn't up to that immediately following the shooting. Instead he gave the world a lame excuse, in effect blaming the victims. He even went so far as to say there was "no comparison" between this incident and the Soviet downing of Korean Air Lines Flight 007 five years ago, at a cost of 269 lives.

Wrong again, Mr. President. While the incidents are not identical, they do bear a certain family resemblance. Each involved the shooting down of a civilian aircraft by a great power in circumstances that made misidentification of the civilian plane easy.

The Iranian airliner was in a war zone, flying right at a ship of war engaged in combat. The Korean plane was hundreds of miles off-course, flying in a militarily sensitive air zone. The Iranian plane was just another blip on a radar screen, indistinguishable (perhaps) from a fighter plane. The Korean plane was flying at night, resembling (from certain angles) an American spy plane. And the greatest similarity of all: In each instance nearly 300 innocent people died.

Mr. Reagan was all indignation and sharp words when the Russians shot down KAL 007, remember? He said:

"What can we think of a regime that so broadly trumpets its vision of peace and global disarmament and yet so callously and quickly commits a terrorist act to sacrifice the lives of innocent human beings?"

What indeed?

We do roughly the same thing and he calls it "an understandable accident." As we Washingtonians like to say: "That dog won't hunt." If the Soviets were terrorists when they shot down KAL 007, we're terrorists now. If we're mere victims of circumstance now, so were they then. Fair is fair.

If Mr. Reagan is confused as to the distinction between accident and error, he might think of it in this way. His election in 1980, coming as the residue of uncontrolled events like the oil embargo and the Iran hostage crisis, was an accident. His re-election in 1984 was a mistake.

Speaking of fairness, however, if there is a grain of justice in all of this, it is that Iran keeps getting the shaft from President Reagan. Iran didn't invent Ronald Reagan, but it certainly made him President. By taking those 53

American hostages in 1978 they poisoned the last year of the Carter presidency, making it all but impossible for him to win re-election. So in a sense he deserves what it's getting. It's the rest of us who don't.

Iraq, on the other hand, deserves some sort of award for diplomatic behavior.

It was Iraq who started the war with Iran in 1980. It was Iraq who first took the war to sea in an attempt to disrupt Iran's oil exports in 1984. It wasn't until 1986 that Iran retaliated by attacking Kuwaiti ships carrying Iraqi oil in the Persian Gulf. This prompted us to send the U.S. Navy into the gulf to, in effect, protect Iraqi oil. Iraq responded by attacking our guided-missile frigate *Starbuck* killing 37 American sailors.

And what does Iraq get from all this? Our support. I wonder if they would consider renting out their foreign secretary? We could certainly use him.

Our major presidential candidates use an oxymoron, were characterized by bold in commenting on the incident. They called it a "tragedy," they called it a "terrible accident." And they didn't care how many votes it cost them. The only political leader with an appropriate response was the one they keep saying has no foreign policy experience. Jesse Jackson said:

"... it sounds so much like the same arguments that the Russians were making when the KAL was shot down. We did not accept those arguments as being valid, and most people in the world do not accept our arguments at this point being valid. The issue is not just fair technology, but failed and vague policy for the region."

He keeps that up, he's going to experience a bad name.

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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.  
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