

Opinion

Saving the world is up to us

The big news of the month seems to be that there's a drought in the Midwest. This is no ordinary drought, mind you. It has had what the average American would probably deem to be disastrous effects — water rationing and the elevation of food prices. Water rationing is a fact of life in many countries and not just in special "drought years" either. It is something that they live with every day. As far as elevations in food prices go, the average American spends less of his/her income on food than his or her counterpart in any other industrialized country.

Christine Schroeder
Guest Columnist

So why is so much noise being made about this drought? To be sure, many farmers are being threatened with extinction, but the American general public has never let that bother them very much before. It's not as if farmers weren't going bankrupt long before The Big Drought. The reason this drought is such a big deal is because many experts say it is only a sample of things to come; that the once far-off "greenhouse effect" has arrived. Other experts say that it is only an isolated drought but still admit that it is an accurate portrayal of what this part of the world will be like when the "greenhouse effect" does occur.

The "greenhouse effect." Wait a minute. Isn't that the horrible thing that was going to happen to our great-great-great-grandchildren (who, by the way, we would conveniently never meet)? Well somewhere along the way, great-great-great-great lost a few "greats" and now we're down to our grandchildren, our children and even ourselves. Alarming, isn't it?

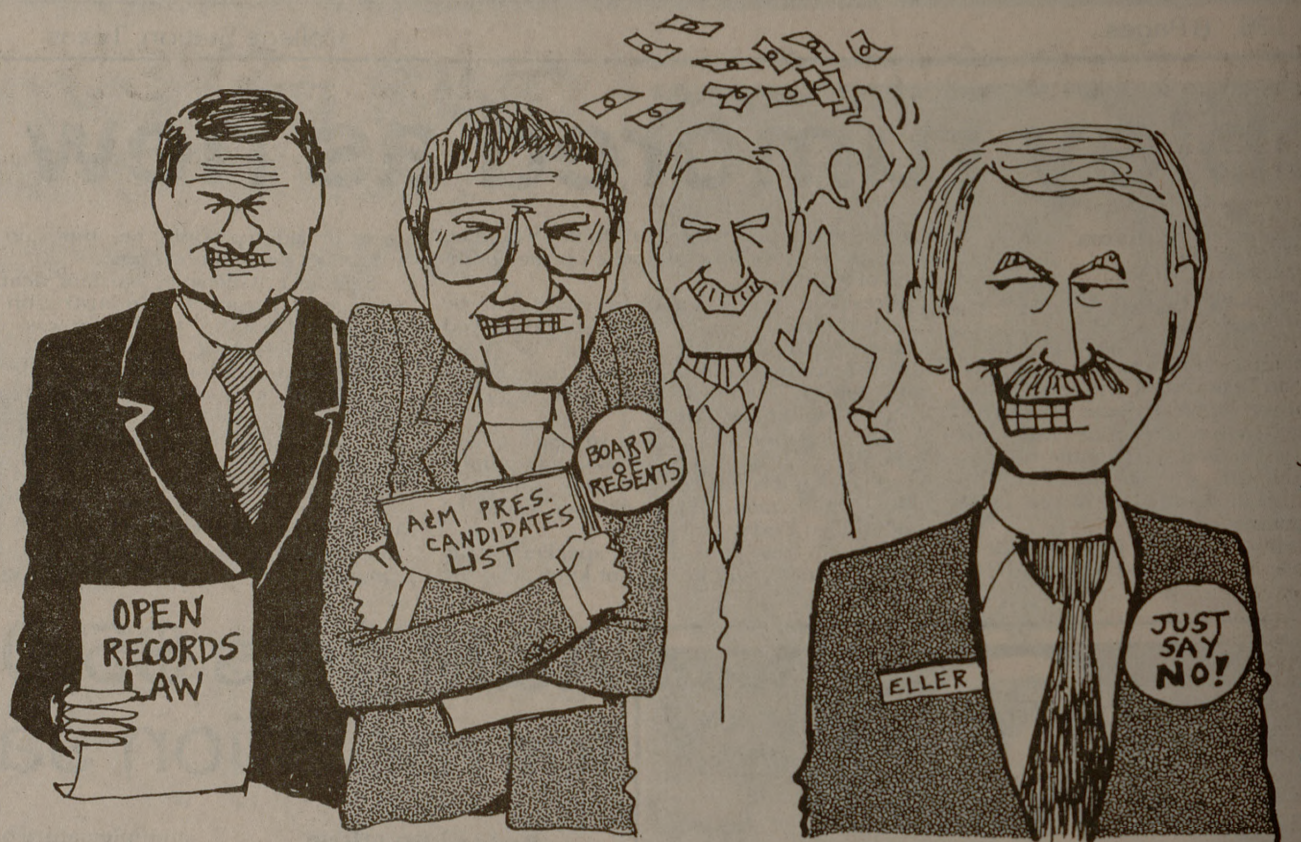
So the real reason we're all so scared of this drought is because it is a sign of something that could affect us directly. We seem, however, to have a great capacity as a people for forgetting as soon as the crisis is past. A good week of rain in the Midwest, and a couple of "well, let's not forget about this" reports on CNN and the MacNeil/Lehrer News-hour will be enough to cause Middle America to settle contentedly back into its collective Lazy Boy recliner and turn back to the much-less-disturbing crises that affect "them" and not "us." A good example of this is the gang crisis in Los Angeles. This, like drugs before it, and the national debt before drugs, has become a cause celebre — a "crisis du jour," if you will. The Middle Class American thinks that the gang problem is a GREAT thing to worry about because it has no effect on them, as of yet.

Ironically, this is the exact opposite reason from why they worry about the drought. Unless you happen to be a black or Hispanic teenager walking home from school in south-central Los Angeles, worried about getting mowed down with a gun before getting home, you probably don't feel very threatened, as of yet, by gangs.

It seems that Americans only want to worry about things that are a direct, frightening threat, or, in contrast, are no threat at all to them personally. In this way, we stop the things that immediately threaten us and then proceed to become fascinated with someone else's tragedy. Have you ever noticed how traffic comes to an absolute standstill during a wreck, even if the lane isn't blocked? Everyone has to stop and look. It seems to escape everyone's attention that that's a real person in there suffering, and that this is not a TV show. In a lot of ways, that's like us, flipping on Headline News at dinner, hearing that three more more teenagers died in Los Angeles today, crack is killing people in droves and hundreds of thousands of people will die of AIDS by 1990. "Tsk, tsk," we murmur to ourselves. "But are my microwave fishsticks CRUNCHY?" Since the vast majority of us are not teenagers in south-central LA, crack addicts, or gay Haitian prostitutes with hemophilia who use intravenous drugs, we're less disturbed by the prospect of their death than we are by the prospect of our food prices going up a little bit. Indeed the prospect of rising food prices seems to disturb today's Americans more than leaving a wasteland for the Americans of tomorrow.

Why do we pay such selective attention to our problems? We've known about the possibility of the "greenhouse effect" for a long time now — it's caused by the combustion of fossil fuels and the resulting carbon dioxide. It seems that it would have been so much easier to have begun to look into alternate energy sources several decades ago. Even now, however, we only look into alternate energy sources when gas prices go over a dollar per gallon (a rate that the Germans and Swedes would give their eye teeth to pay) because high gas prices are a threat to U.S. We might have to actually (GASP!) economize. How ironic that, when we do develop an alternate energy source, it is all too often a nuclear power plant, which leaves a toxic waste that remains for hundreds of years. Hopefully however, that won't be a problem until the time of our great-great-great-grandchildren . . .

Christine Schroeder is a senior psychology major



Oh, those freshman days

Yesterday I had a terrible, horrible, no good, very bad day. Now don't get me wrong, I am not sharing this with all of you in a desperate attempt to gain sympathy. I call my mom for that. I am sharing this because everyone at one point or another has one of "those days" when you wish you had never gotten out of bed — when there isn't a "right" side of the bed to get up on. One of those days when you think that whatever superior being it is that holds the power of control over everyone's life on this planet is somehow pissed at you and you don't know why. You just wish there was some way of making amends with this person and save yourself from insanity. You make futile efforts to save yourself by apologizing for everything you have done wrong in the past couple days. But nothing was to save me from having one of the worst days of my life.

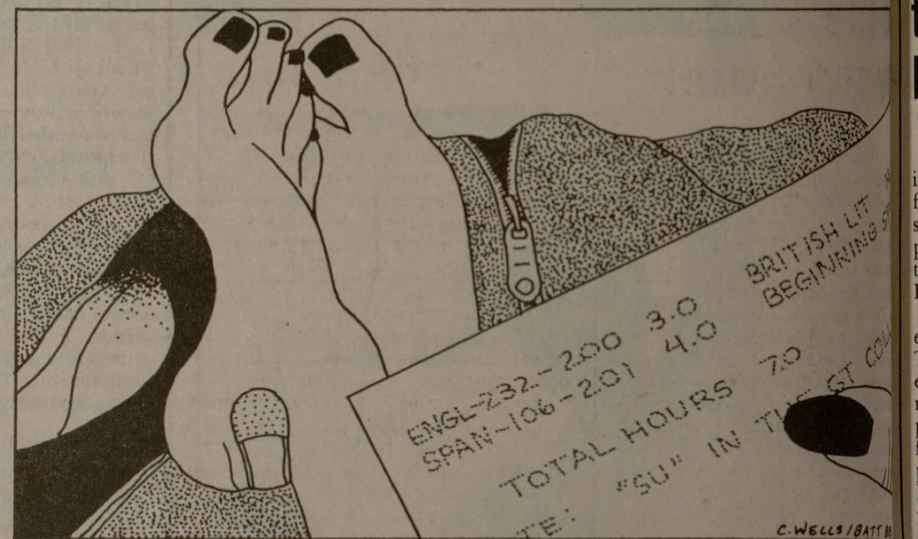


Barbara Jones

During the course of my day I suffered several of what I like to refer to as "freshman experiences." You know what I am talking about. Those completely humiliating experiences that you experienced quite often as a freshman. Since my freshman year I have subconsciously blocked out all those horrible "freshman experiences." As a senior you get very cocky and become very confident. You look down in contempt every fall when you see those groups (because they never go anywhere alone) of giggling, silly freshmen bouncing around campus in their heels and perfectly primed faces. After my "day from Hell" however I am going to be much more sympathetic when I see the panic-stricken faces of a freshmen running to class on the first day of school. Well perhaps I should get on with my story.

Since I am way too cool to go to the first day of class, I sauntered into my English lit class in Blocker on Tuesday. To my dismay after sitting through the first ten minutes of class I was to find out that I was in the wrong class. Desperately trying to maintain my dignity I attempted to crawl out of way too cool to go to the first day of class, I sauntered into my English lit class in Blocker on Tuesday. To my dismay after sitting through the first ten minutes of class I was to find out that I was in the wrong class. Desperately trying to maintain my dignity I attempted to crawl out of the room undetected. But NO! The prof was not going to let me off that easy.

"Are you in the wrong class?" he said.



I was horrified. Would you like a bullhorn? I don't think the class next door heard you. However he turned out to be semi-helpful and told me that the class I was looking for had been moved to the Military Science building.

10:10 a.m. I am heading with great speed towards the Military Science Building, but wait! I have absolutely no idea where this damn building is. I stop and ask three different people where it was (definitely a freshman move). Each student vaguely points in the same general direction. I don't want you to point I want you to take me by the hand and show me where it is.

"It's somewhere over by Rudder," one student said. Well gee thanks a lot.

10:25 a.m. I finally after circling the building a few times find it. By now I have a very painful blister on the back of my heel so I'm carrying my shoes (another freshman move). Then I have another terrifying thought. I have no idea what room my class is in. By now I am panicked. I am going to be at least 30 minutes late on the second day of class. This is the kind of thing professors remember about you. After running through the whole building, interrupting classes to ask them "is this English 232?" I find out that my class is definitely not in this building.

By now there is a very strong consensus within my brain saying, "Give it up chick, you gave it your best shot and you failed. Hang it up and try again tomorrow."

But then there is another part of me saying, "If you don't go to this class you are going to be a marked woman with this prof. You are going to be so far behind you'll never get caught up and then you'll never grad . . ." OK, OK I'll

go, I'll go! With hopes of graduation looming so close in the distance "good student" in me usually wins the moral battles within my head.

10:35 I hobble over to the MSB and to call the English Department and find out if this class truly exists and does where it is. The English Department said it was to be held in the Chemistry Building, room 110.

"Which chemistry building? There are two chemistry buildings," I asked. "I wasn't sure, so off I go dragging my tired foot behind across campus again."

10:45 a.m. I finally arrive. I gracefully take a seat with minimal turbulence to the rest of the class, but the professor stops class, calls me up to the front of the class, hands me a syllabus, and then clears his throat as if he is about to make a very profound statement. I was silently praying that this statement would have nothing to do with me.

"Miss Jones, you will have to do your breakfast before you arrive to class next time," he said while pointing to Coke in my hand. He then proceeded to point out to me on his syllabus that it clearly states that drinking in the classroom is strictly prohibited by University Regulations, 1987-88 edition, p. 34. I could think of was why me? What have I done to deserve this day?

What are morals of this story? Better to freshmen; always go to the first day of class; never wear a new pair of shoes before they are worn in; and never arrive into a new class on the second day minutes late.

Barbara Jones is a senior journalism major and a columnist for The Battalion.

Mighty spirit, tell me more

Each year right around the 4th of July, I talk to one of the Founding Fathers of our country, former President Thomas Jefferson.



Lewis Grizzard

Don't laugh. If Oral Roberts can talk to God and Shirley MacLaine can channelize with some guy from the Ice Age, I can talk to Thomas Jefferson.

"So," he wanted to know in his last visit, "how were the presidential primaries?"

"They were fine," I said.

"Bob Dole got the nod for the Republicans, didn't he?"

"Dole didn't do well at all. George Bush won going away!"

"I would never have believed that. Did Bush shed his wimp image?"

"Sort of, he went at it with Dan Rather during a televised interview and he said, 'Doo-doo' in public."

"Doo-doo?" asked Mr. Jefferson.

"Doo-doo," I reiterated.

"What about the preacher? I forgot his name."

"Pat Robertson, sir? The press found out his wife got pregnant before they were married, and he started making up a lot of stuff about missiles in Cuba.

"On top of that there was a lot of scandal involving television ministers, and that hurt him, too."

"What sort of scandals?"

"For one, Jim Bakker of the PTL Club was nailed for certain sexual indiscretions and then Jimmy Swaggart was caught consorting with a known prostitute."

"We should have mentioned something about television ministries in 'freedom of religion,'" said Mr. Jefferson.

"Why didn't you, sir?" I asked.

"Ben Franklin thought nobody would actually take them seriously. We were wrong about a lot of things."

"Mike Dukakis. He is the sure Democratic nominee."

"I've never heard of him."

"Little short guy with black hair. He is governor of Massachusetts."

"Has he got any personality?"

"That of a slice of Velveeta cheese."

"Can he win in November?"

"He's running against George Bush."

"Good point," said Mr. Jefferson.

"That's enough about politics," he continued. "Let's talk baseball. I bet Ben Franklin 10 bucks George Steinbrenner would fire Billy Martin before the 4th of July."

"That makes you a winner, sir," I said to the former president.

"Hey," he replied before saying goodbye for another year, "is this a great country or what?"

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The Battalion

(USPS 045 360)

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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.

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

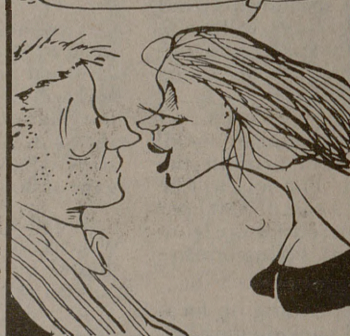
BLOOM COUNTY

BINKLEY, SR. IS DREAMING...

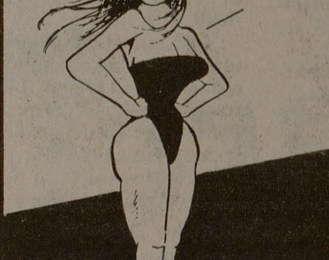
I'M SO ASHAMED! I'M TOO MATURE TO THINK A "SPORTS ILLUSTRATED" BIMBETTE TO BE MY WIFE!



BUT AS YOUR IDEAL, I'M NOT JUST A BIMBETTE...



I'M A PERFECT MOTHER, A GREAT COOK AND ALMOST BUT NOT QUITE AS BRIGHT AND WITTY AS YOU ARE!



...AND YOU LOOK LIKE BROOKE SHIELDS.



...WITH BIG GARBANZOS!