

# Opinion

## Aggies are blind to rationality of needed tradition changes

The great Italian conductor Arturo Toscanini was once told by an orchestra member that his method of conducting a certain piece was not in line with the way the orchestra had always played that piece. The musician told Toscanini that they played the piece the way they did because it was "tradition." Toscanini immediately replied that "tradition is nothing more than the last bad performance."



Lydia Berzsenyi

Toscanini's words have a great deal of meaning in Aggieland, one of the only places in the world that doing something twice constitutes a tradition.

Now I'm not saying that tradition is simply repeating a bad performance, but I am saying that perhaps some rituals should be looked at more critically and not continued just because they've always been done a certain way in the past.

It's true that one of the first things every Aggie learns is that A&M has a history rich in tradition. That's one of A&M's assets, and there's nothing wrong with it. But there is a time and a place for tradition, just as there is a time and a place for change. And when that time for change is upon us, we should take off our tradition blinders and think as logical adults rather than unyielding children.

Take bonfire, for instance. Earlier

this week, Anthony Wilson suggested that the bonfire site be moved because of parking and safety considerations. Ever since that article was published, people have been telling me how stupid that suggestion was. Their reasons? Well, let's see. There's tradition, and then there's...uh...well, tradition, and...uh... These tradition-blinded Aggies seem to forget the purpose of bonfire, which is to build Aggie spirit in preparation for the annual A&M-t.u. grudge match.

There are valid arguments for moving bonfire, some of which you can read in the Sept. 19 paper. Perhaps before people begin defending bonfire because of tradition they should look at the reasons.

In the past, many issues have become controversial because someone wanted to alter them, usually for the benefit of the student body and the University. Let's take a look at some of these issues which were considered unchangeable simply because of "tradition."

**An all-military student body.** I, for one, enjoy seeing people dressed in other colors than khaki, green and beige. And seeing males with some hair every once in a while offers some viewing variety.

**An all-male student body.** I've heard several male Aggies, both old Ags and new Ags, say that they are rather pleased now that there are members of the fairer sex in their classes. And I don't believe I've ever heard a female Aggie, old or new, say they were unhappy about attending the school.

**An all-male corps.** Women cadets

have added much to the Corps, both in terms of morale and other contributions. Their long-standing exclusion was both unwarranted and unrealistic, considering the female involvement in the armed forces of almost every country in the world.

For those of you who still feel that tradition is absolute and, like Extra-Strength Excederin, should never be tampered with, here's some Aggie trivia which would be extremely out of place in 1988.

Before being known as the Aggieland, the A&M annual was called the Long Horn. Geez, can't you just hear the laughter we'd get from Austin with that kind of name? It would surely dampen the Aggie jokes.

Many years ago, Muster was held on the grass of the MSC. If we still did that today we would be violating one of our own traditions by not keeping off the grass.

Traditions, like some old clothes, never go out of style, but they can be outgrown. Some of the traditions of the past have given way to change, and that change has almost always been for the better. Twenty years from now, some of our traditions will not be around in their present form, but I seriously doubt A&M will be suffering. There is a time for traditions, but that time may not last forever.

So the next time someone suggests changing an age-old Aggie tradition, try to think logically instead of arguing blindly.

Lydia Berzsenyi is a senior math major and editor of The Battalion.

## Mail Call

### Editor abusing responsibility, Duke

EDITOR:

Lydia Berzsenyi's Sept. 16 column was an abuse of her privilege and responsibility as editor of a fine college newspaper. She writes in her column, "I think being informed about national issues, national history and national policies is one of the biggest ways citizens of all ages can participate in planning their nation's future."

So why is she so ignorant of the issue she attempts to write about? Her audacity to question the patriotism of a man who has actively served his nation as a governor and a legislator for many years is only exceeded by her misunderstanding of the facts of this issue.

Gov. Dukakis is not against the Pledge of Allegiance; the bill he vetoed in Massachusetts was unconstitutional because it would have sent teachers to jail for not reciting the pledge. Is that how George Bush wants to teach a new generation of Americans about freedom — by sending its teachers to jail?

A pledge becomes nothing more than a series of words when one is forced to say it. Americans say the Pledge of Allegiance because they believe it and really mean it, not because they have to. Massachusetts' teachers and students, like all American teachers and students, have always, and will always, proudly and voluntarily say the Pledge. And so does Michael Dukakis, a patriot for president!

Patrick J. Janis '91

### Batt seems bully-bully for Bush

EDITOR:

Apparently, the Bush-for-president committee is writing the headlines for The Battalion's wire stories.

I am referring to the story about Lauro Cavazos becoming the new Secretary of Education in the Sept. 21 Batt. The headline read "Bush makes history by swearing in Cavazos as Secretary of Education." Cavazos is the one who made history, not Bush.

An accurate headline would have read "Cavazos makes history by becoming first Hispanic cabinet member."

The only thing Bush did was to show up for another campaign photo opportunity.

That's been his specialty these past seven-and-a-half years.

Mike Thomas '87

Letters to the editor should not exceed 300 words in length. The editorial staff reserves the right to edit letters for length and clarity, but will make every effort to maintain the author's intent. Each letter must be signed and must include classification, address and telephone number of the writer.

## Buttock tattoos are just plain asinine

Every so often, a real-life love story comes along that really strums the heartstrings.



Mike Royko

I've been avidly following one such story as it has unfolded in the gossip columns, People magazine and other lofty journals.

It's the romance between Brigitte Nielsen, a tall blond actress, and Mark Gastineau, a football player employed by the New York Jets.

The romance has been tempestuous. One day their publicists say it's on and they will soon marry. But before the newspaper ink is even dry, the romance is off and they will part with said regrets. Currently it is on.

And there are obstacles, as any tempestuous romance requires, such as the football player getting rid of his present wife, who is being stubborn.

But the most intriguing part of this love story — actually two parts — is how they affirmed their engagement.

As a symbol of their lifelong commitment, each had the other's name, within a heart, tattooed on their buttocks.

They decided on buttock tattoos, rather than the more mundane engagement ring, because a tattoo is permanent. You can always pawn a ring. But you can't pawn a buttock.

In trying to keep up with this romance, we called Joe Brokaw, who is Ms. Nielsen's publicist in New York. We asked if he had ever seen the tattoos.

"No, I don't get that personal," Mr. Brokaw said. "The sports writers can go

in the locker room and see Mr. Gastineau's. But I don't know my client, Ms. Nielsen, well enough."

A pity. It would be a fine professional perk.

Nor did the publicist know who applied the tattoos, and if the loving couple had them done simultaneously, possibly while holding hands.

"It's not an area I have any information on," he said.

So we called a few tattoo parlors to see if this sort of thing is common.

I was surprised to learn that it is. Especially among women.

Pete Collurafici, who owns the Tattoo Factory in Chicago, said: "In the last ten years, I think I've done a couple of thousand buttocks."

Matching? For couples who are in love?

"The man usually has his on his arm. The woman gets hers on her buttocks. Maybe it's because women don't want anyone to see it."

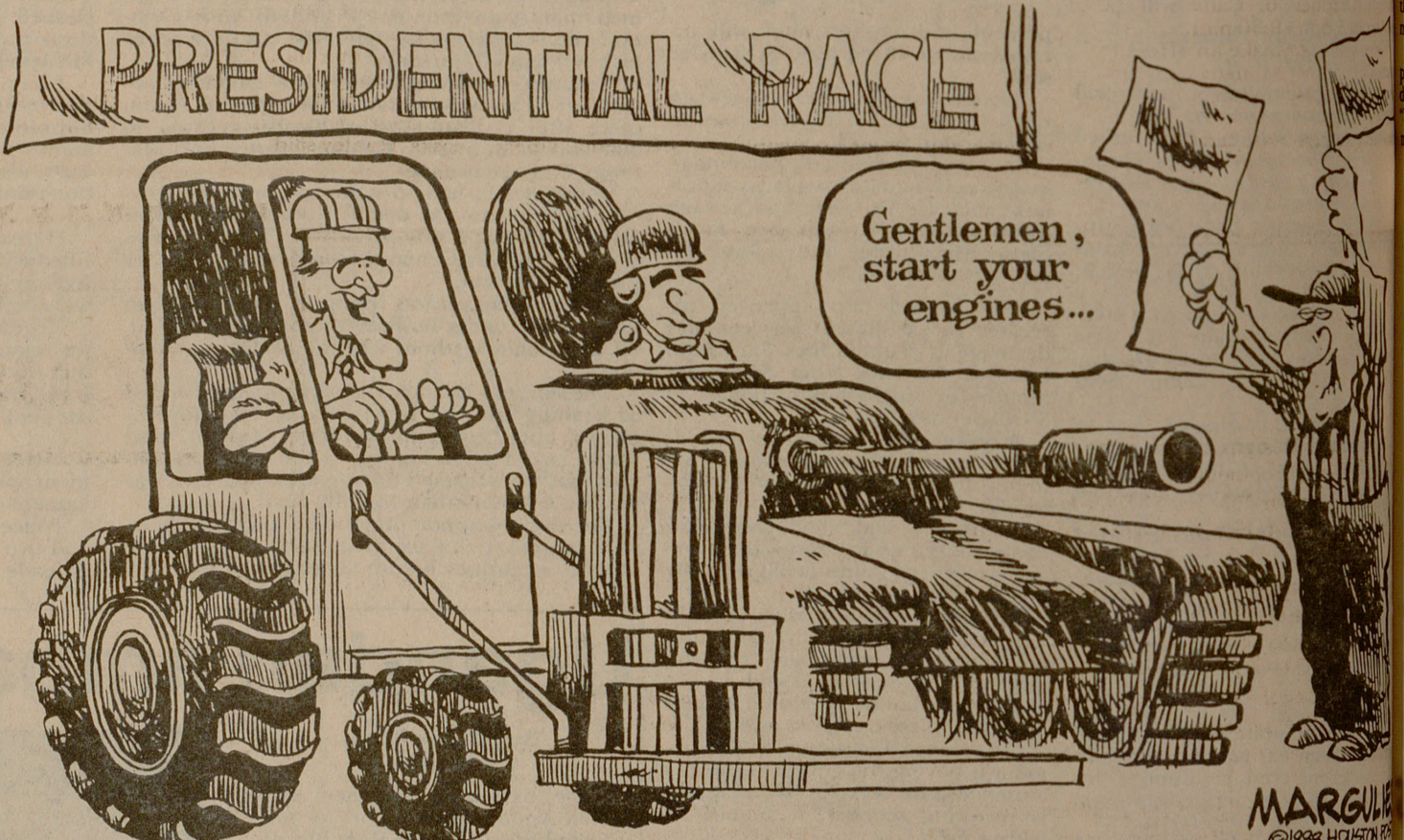
Yes, modesty is a feminine virtue.

"Or," he said, "a woman gets it on a part of her body that she wants to draw attention to. Maybe she thinks she has a great a--."

And have the ones you've worked on been great a--es?

"Not all. Sometimes they have real big a--es. Of course, that's my personal opinion. Some guys might like real big a--es."

I would think that would be helpful if one of them has a real long name. For example, if a lady wanted a heart and the words "I love Chester P. Gershenweiller Jr.," a bit of girth would be useful.



Another tattooist, Bob Oslon, of Custom Tattooing in Chicago, has also decorated many a bottom. But he described an even more unusual symbol of love.

"I had a couple of punkers come in. She wanted a tattoo of his teeth marks on her arm. So he bit on her forearm really hard. The impression stayed there for quite a while, and I outlined the teeth marks in red ink."

An interesting social insight was made by a Hollywood tattooist.

While tattoos are popular among southern Californians, they seldom have names put on their bodies.

"We have a lot of people who want a heart or a flower in a private spot, but not names," said Greg James of the Sunset Strip Tattoo Studio.

"Would you want someone's name tattooed on you? Of course not. Just because they love somebody, people don't want a name branded to them."

This attitude could mean that Californians aren't into lifetime commitments the way others are. And maybe that's wise. If, for example, Mark and Brigitte break up for good, perish the thought, how will she explain her tattoo to someone she might meet in the future? She can't just say: "Oh, Mark was just a friend."

A solution was suggested by Greg Lamont, who runs the Lake Geneva (Wis.) Tattooing Co.

"I had a couple come in. She had his name on her shoulder blade. And he had her name on his back.

"But then they got into divorce proceedings. They asked me to tattoo the word 'void' through each one's name."

"When I finished with her, she turned to him and said: 'Now I'm really through with you, you S.O.B.'"

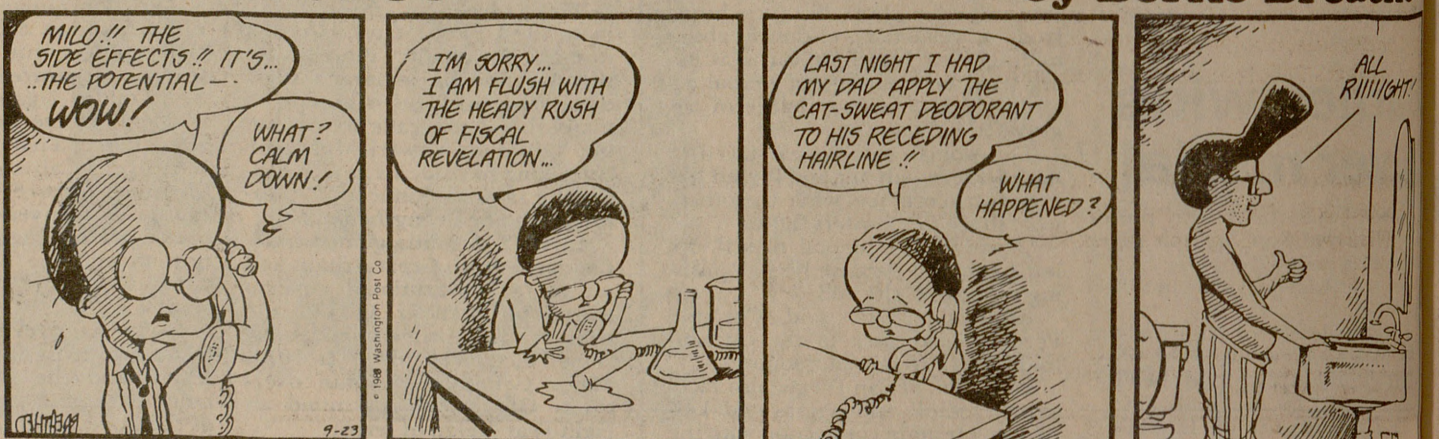
So I suppose that's something Brigitte and Mark could consider, if they ever part for good, heaven forbid.

And if some other fellow asks Brigitte: "I hate to get personal, but why do you have the word 'void' on your buttock?" she can say:

"Oh, my bank did it."

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## BLOOM COUNTY



by Berke Breathed

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