

Fish's right not to vote

From an Oct. 3 Corps of Cadets public relations memorandum to all commanding officers and 1st sergeants regarding freshman elections: "Voting should be made mandatory for your freshmen."

The memo informed commanding officers and 1st sergeants of the procedure which needed to be followed for freshmen to vote. At the bottom of the memo was a list of freshman cadets running for offices. The commanders were to emphasize to the fish that they "have to memorize the names in advance" because "they can not bring a list to the polling site."

That Corps Headquarters encourage freshmen to vote for their fish "buddies" or that they want overwhelming representation in Student Government is perfectly understandable and acceptable. Every other organization on campus would do and want the same things.

However, that Corps Headquarters advise that voting be made mandatory for any of its members is a violation of that person's right to choose whether or not to.

The Battalion Editorial Board

Mail Call

Straight ticket voting not smart

EDITOR:

We all probably accept the idea that casting our informed vote in public elections is the highest form of expressing allegiance to democracy. The key word here is informed. Straight ticket voting is a hold-over from the days when a party boss could hand out money to the uneducated and instruct them to pull the lever with the elephant or donkey picture on it.

Fortunately, most of us attending A&M don't require a picture on the ballot when we vote. Unfortunately, many of us have acted like we do in recent elections. We have been the embarrassment of our district on these occasions by acting like illiterate voters and punching the straight party ticket which impacts many local offices.

Remember, there is no requirement for competence or honesty to get your name on the ballot. Likewise, there is no assurance that an incumbent, whatever his or her party affiliation, is competent or honest.

The only way to vote responsibly in a race is to be familiar with the candidates' records or platforms. An uninformed vote is worse than no vote because you can be responsible for tossing out a good official or failing to get rid of a bad one. Our campus has been responsible for doing this in several past local races because we are such a large (but temporary) population.

Remember, you don't have to vote in every race. Vote with your convictions for the presidential race, but if you don't recognize the names of the congressmen, judges, county commissioners or others, it is wiser to skip over those races. Let them be decided by the votes of those students and other citizens who have taken time to inform themselves on the issues.

Please don't leave the rest of the county with the impression that Aggies are as poorly informed as the illiterate. Remember, the permanent residents of the area will have to live with any bad choices we make.

Bob Murry Graduate student

Class of '88 thanks Wilson

EDITOR:

On behalf of the Class of '88, I would like to thank Anthony Wilson for reviewing the gifts we were able to give to Texas A&M. I am only disappointed that it took an article such as his to finally give some attention to our University-wide contributions. The Battalion had been invited to cover several of our gift dedications and chose not to attend.

I would also like to clarify our reasons for giving the Kyle Field lettering. Our selection of words welcomes visitors to our school and identifies our student body as the original 12th Man. The lettering is a gift to the University and the students, not the athletic department, nor is it intended to boost only football. Other events, even non-athletic, are held in Kyle Field. Because of the coverage the lettering may receive during television broadcasts, viewers will know the event is coming from our stadium.

The lettering cost our class only one-fourth of the money we raised. Unlike the classes before us, we wanted to give more than one gift with all of our money.

Lastly, Anthony, you left one significant gift — lighting for the World War II hero plaques in the Memorial Student Center.

The Class of '88 intended our class gifts to touch as many aspects of past, present and future Aggie lives we could. I believe we have been successful.

Andrea Beshara '88 Class of '88 president

Iron Maiden's a musical genius

EDITOR:

I would like to reply to some of the comments made by Roy "Royalty" Davis in Friday's Batt.

I like U2, Jimi Hendrix and Mozart. And despite evidence to the contrary such as "Raspberry Beret," "When Doves Cry" and "Little Red Corvette," I admit Prince has talent. Your criticisms of Iron Maiden, however, show poor taste. My CD collection includes disks by Segovia, Rush, Malmsteen, Mozart, Van Halen and, of course, Iron Maiden.

It is apparent to me that you have either never listened to them, or that you are completely tone deaf. Their creativity, innovativeness and brilliant melodies easily belie your attempts to criticize them. I suspect you wrote them off because they are labeled "heavy metal" and never gave their music a chance.

To be frank, any musician would tell you their music is a lot closer in quality and spirit to the work of a genius like Mozart than any of the artists you listed.

John Dumas '89

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.

Technology may be immoral

Let's take a brief look into the future. The date is Oct. 20, 2008 and you've just gotten home from a hard day at work. Your spouse, who greets you at the door, informs you that your nine-year-old, test-tube son has been reprimanded by his elementary school teacher for shooting spitwads at another another kid (some things just never change).

On your way up to your son's room you stop by to visit with your 117-year-old grandmother who is hooked up to a machine that keeps her heart, lungs and kidneys functioning.

"How are you feeling, Grandma?"

She responds by making a wheezing, gurgling noise.

"Good," you say. "Glad to hear it."

After sternly lecturing your son, you are on your way back downstairs when your genetically engineered pet dog (patent pending) greets you by trying to bite your hand off. You make it downstairs, however, and sit down to a scrumptious meal of soybean mush and dried kelp burgers.

A bit overstated, you say?

Perhaps. But as our technology becomes more and more advanced, the ideas of a genetically engineered pet or a person who can live only if hooked up to a machine are becoming increasingly more commonplace.

It's situations like these that should prompt us to ask the following question: Does the fact that we have the ability to do something mean that we should do it?

The only rational answer: No.

By way of example, let's examine genetic engineering. The rationale for tampering with the genetics of animals



Dean Sueltenfuss Columnist

is that better strains of domestic livestock can be created and this would benefit consumers. Genetic engineering can produce leaner pork and beef, chicken meat with a higher protein content, etc. It can also be used to produce laboratory animals that can be used in new research on human diseases.

So the genetic engineering of animals can provide humans with a number of direct and indirect benefits. These benefits, however, don't make such genetic engineering morally right. By tampering with millions of years of evolution, mankind is running the risk of making some huge errors.

The researchers who are conducting genetic engineering experiments are like children playing with fire. In many ways these researchers bear certain similarities to those men who created the world's first atomic weapon — they knew how to build the bomb, but they didn't really know what it would do.

Another area of ever-increasing concern is medical technology. While few people would question the benefits of new surgical techniques that can save many lives, there are other areas of medical technology that produce questionable results.

Care for the terminally ill is one of these areas. Lately, an increasing amount of research and time is being

devoted to technology that allows extremely sick people to survive. In many cases this technology doesn't cure the people — it just prolongs their suffering.

One example is the person who is suffering from a painful, incurable disease and is surviving only because of an artificial life-support system. Many people argue that it would be unethical to let patients off of such machines — in effect "killing" them. On the other hand, leaving these patients on life-support machines for months or years at a time is, in many cases, doing them a great injustice than pulling the plug.

There are no simple answers in ethical dilemmas such as these. These are complex ones that we have not had to deal with before. But whether is right or wrong we must realize that spending massive amounts of money on technology that will benefit only a few, we are neglecting masses of undernourished people — individuals who require only the simplest care in order to lead productive, healthy lives.

Is it right to spend millions of dollars on fancy life-support machines when thousands of people die from malnutrition each year? Is it right to spend money on life-support machines when many poverty-stricken families do not receive adequate medical care while wealthy undergo medical procedures such as face lifts and liposuctioning?

Perhaps before we spend time and money on such luxuries as these, our society should insure that all of its members receive at least fundamental medical care. Only after these basics have been assured should we proceed with the frills of increased technology.

Dean Sueltenfuss is a junior journalism major and columnist for The Battalion.

It's the Oscar Madison way for me to Mom's chagrin

Life's too complicated.

Remember the good old days when the worst problems involved how to get Play-Doh out of your ears and what to do if Mom found the three-week-old twinkie hidden under your bed? So when did life get so complicated?

I think college has something to do with it.

I thought things were tough when I was in high school. But I would give anything now to go back to the days when Mom did my laundry and all the bills went to Dad (they still do, but now he yells more). Now I am supposed to be a responsible adult — but what do you expect when I have role models like Pee Wee Herman and Jackie Sherrill?

Signs of my inadequate attempts to deal with life are everywhere. If you don't see them, ask my mother — she has a particular talent for pointing them out.

When Mom found out I don't really iron too many of my clothes at college, she got upset (and no, my clothes are NOT all polyester). She swears that I would be a more popular and well-rounded individual if I would just iron. She was also upset because she knew that everyone took one look at my rumpled being and blamed her (what will people think?). Yes, Mom, I started a smear campaign against you and my first official action was to stop ironing my clothes. Your name will be mud before you know it.

Then there's my shoddy attempt to keep a balanced checkbook. There is no hell — only unbalanced bank books. What is it about those stupid things that can reduce an intelligent person to a



Becky Weisenfels Managing Editor

whiny idiot? I can add and subtract — I passed elementary school. But when I try to do it in my checkbook, I lose any ability with numbers that I ever possessed.

No one knew about my secret shame with the bank book until I was charged twice for a magazine subscription. I told my Mom I had paid the bill, so she wanted to see the canceled check. Canceled check? Am I supposed to keep those?

I didn't listen to what mom was saying (quite loudly, if I may say so). I sat the phone down and praised my lucky stars that she would have to drive at least 4 1/2 hours before she could do any physical harm to me. By then I could have a ticket to Jamaica.

I have consistently failed to bring any semblance of order to my life for almost four years. Every summer I pledge to become more organized, develop a purpose in life and never skip a class. Fat chance.

But I finally realized I don't need to bring more order to my life. And I am doing just fine even though my only purpose in life is making sure leftover pizza is taken out of the refrigerator before it develops independent thought.

I don't need to be one of those uptight people who take life so seriously.

Ever have a class with those people who finish their research papers weeks before it's due? I have — I used to hate it. Now I realize these people are overachievers who constantly push themselves. They are the people who will get ulcers, lose their hair, have varicose veins. They're so conscientious that they were probably premature with a stopwatch in their little hands.

And what about those students who already have jobs before they graduate or worse yet, have started their own business. You know the ones. They dress in clothes without stains on them. They drive cars that were made a decade. They carry briefcases. Obviously people who are trying to impress the yuppie generation while they are getting a tax break on that Mercedes.

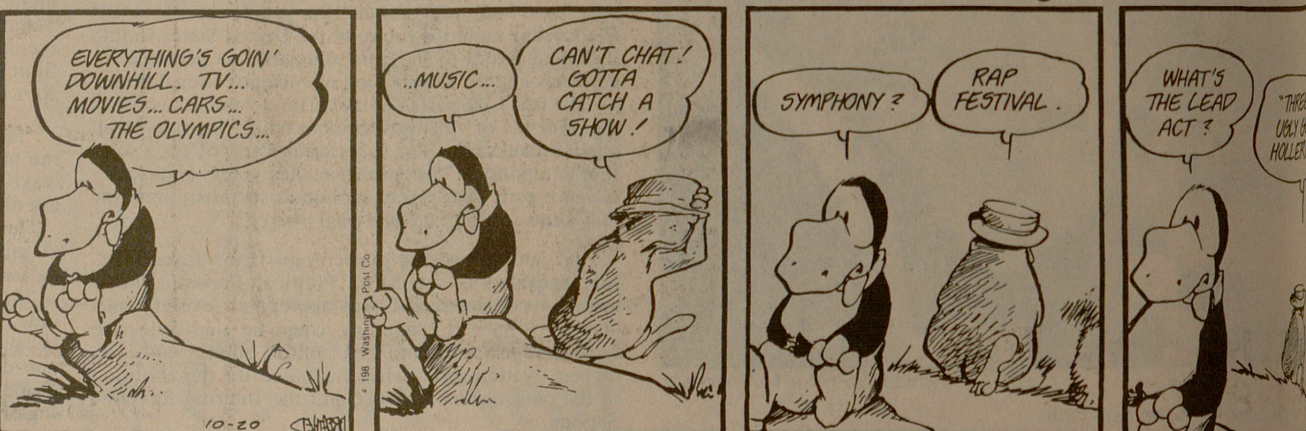
I don't need any of that stress pressure. So what if I dress more Punky Brewster than Princess Di? What if I oversleep every once in a while? And so what if everything I eat comes from a vending machine.

If I can't be a slob now, when will I be? After graduation I really have to deal with life. We're talking insurance, doctor bills and 9-to-5 workdays.

Big deal if my life is a little disorganized and goofy. I still have a few months to be a total derelict before I have to leave my dorm. My clothes are ironed and my checkbook is unbalanced — I'm perfectly happy.

Becky Weisenfels is a senior journalism major, managing editor and columnist for The Battalion.

BLOOM COUNTY



by Berke Breathed

The Battalion

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