

DON'T HOLD YOUR BREATH WAITING FOR THIS:

RADIO MOSCOW



We shouldn't bash until we understand all of the facts

"When you feel like criticizing anyone, just remember that everyone in the world hasn't had the advantages you've had."

These first lines of F. Scott Fitzgerald's classic novel "The Great Gatsby" contain an axiom from which we could all learn. When upon the threshold of judgment, we should pause and think about our words.

Generally, humans are conservative about things we know little about and tend to take on uninformed and somewhat pessimistic attitudes about those things.

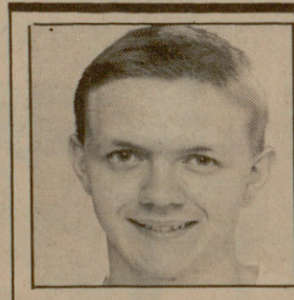
Though it has existed within all of us for centuries, I've seen a long trend of negativity recently — especially exhibited on the *Batt's* Opinion Page.

We've had many columns and letters that denounce the many facets of our life — some reasonable, others unfounded. There's nothing wrong with being critical, but there's a big gap between constructive criticism and thoughtless bashing.

Constructive criticism is a knowledgeable evaluation of a subject that attempts to find sources of improvements for that subject and most importantly, provides a better alternative. Denouncing, or bashing, of a subject implies a judgment or conclusion made on limited knowledge, usually a stereotype of the subject, with little or no logical reasons for arriving at such a conclusion.

For example, let's look at two recent *Battalion* columns. The Fish Camp article was well-written and the thoughts clearly expressed, but there was no logical basis, taking in to account the facts, for the author to say, "Fish Camp is a total waste of time despite the effort put into it." Hundreds, and possibly thousands, of students would testify otherwise.

On the other hand, the issues brought up in the bonfire column by Anthony Wilson were valid concerns that have been reinforced by recent ac-



Timm Doolen
Columnist

cidents during bonfire cut. He also constructively criticized the existing conditions and provided a useful, albeit probably unworkable, solution. Mr. Wilson's intent was not to do away with bonfire but to improve it so that it could remain longer at this university.

I am reluctant to touch tradition myself, but the constant bashing of the University of Texas is another product of the same negative mentality. If things would have gone slightly different, I might have been a Longhorn instead of an Aggie, and the people whom I call friends now would have senselessly been my sworn enemy come Thanksgiving Day. I've indulged in t.u. bashing myself, but usually in fun and hardly serious.

Rivalries are healthy, but let's keep it in perspective.

Along the same lines, we've all seen the shirts around campus that say "No frats since the beginning . . . an Aggie Tradition" and "Rent a friend, join a frat." Nothing against the people who wear them, but the ideology behind these phrases seems to be a product of a limited knowledge on the subject.

Though social in nature, fraternities do many service projects for the surrounding community and the University. Addressing the selectiveness of fraternities: well, show me an organization or group that isn't selective. From Texas A&M University to any corporation to our close friends, almost every group is selective with regards to its members.

The idea that the Greek system is detrimental to A&M is a mistaken one. Like the Corps of Cadets, another stereo-

typed group, Greeks are here to stay, so all Aggies must accept it.

In this election year we have seen how negative human nature can be, as evidenced in the campaigns of the candidates. But an appeal to a higher sense of reason demands that we not be overly judgmental or negative without warrant for those judgments.

If we feel strongly about a situation, we should not bash the subjects of our whims unabashedly, but rather helpfully criticize them after gaining the necessary knowledge to do so.

This may seem negative, but many people, definitely not all, are too negative. It may sound corny, but we should try to see the good in people and groups we know little about rather than brandishing them with a stereotype. The failure to do this is at the roots of racism, a historically decided wrong.

Charles Lamb, a 19th-century English author, was once at a reception where a group of people were raving about a political colleague's various faults. Amidst the conversation, Lamb said that he absolutely couldn't stand the person.

Another man remarked that he wasn't aware that Charles knew the gentleman in question.

He said "Oh, I don't. How could I hate a man I know?"

His words reinforce the belief that in certain respects, we all share some basic qualities and similar feelings. When we get to know those who oppose us, we see a little of ourselves. Yet we differ in many respects and it benefits us to understand each other's differences.

As F. Scott Fitzgerald said later in his book, clarifying the quote above, "a sense of the fundamental decencies is parcelled out unequally at birth." We should remember this when we begin to unduly criticize.

Timm Doolen is a sophomore computer science major and columnist for The Battalion.

Mail Call

Corps weakening, Greeks on rise

EDITOR:

I just have a couple comments about fraternities and those who oppose them. I am not in a fraternity currently, but I plan on going through rush in the spring.

My comments are concerning the T-shirt which states: "A tradition since the beginning — No frats."

First, this T-shirt is worn by guys who were told by some upperclassmen that fraternities were a no-no and that they should hate fraternities. Obviously with those shirts around campus, most listened. They didn't go out and try to form their own opinion.

Second, the statement "A tradition since the beginning" is faulty. The Corps of Cadets is the original tradition since the beginning. If that tradition was as strong as it was when it started, Texas A&M would still be a military school, and most of the guys who hate fraternities wouldn't be here.

Unfortunately, traditions are sometimes abolished or altered. For a school as big and with as many traditions as Texas A&M, that is sometimes necessary for a school to succeed. Traditions which were important 100 years ago may not be as important today, such as the Corps. So come on, guys, form your own opinions and stop listening to someone else's!

Greg Flinn '92

Us? Lie and cheat?

EDITOR:

"Birds of a feather flock together" — Andy Keetch in the Oct. 18 Mail Call.

Well said, Mr. Keetch. And that is why I am sure the majority of this campus will support your political views and vote for Bush on Nov. 8.

Why should we expect anything different from an institution which claims to abide by a code of honor to never "lie, cheat or steal," but in practice actually follows the premise that anything is fair as long as WE win.

The Aggie Code of Honor is dead and buried under the MSC grass. Our football coaching staff has most recently emphasized that point. The members of the Corps of Cadets has been emphasizing it for years (i.e. denial of rigorous and sometimes deadly hazing/midnight training, pirated test copies in private Corps exam files, and theft of state city limit signs from a certain unpopular city before each Thanksgiving).

Why should any of us not expect each and every Aggie to support another Republican administration? After all, the last one has lied to (misinformed) and cheated us by selling weapons to the same people who take us hostage, and has practically "stolen" any economically secure future from us by turning this into the greatest debtor nation in the world.

So if we can handle a slap on the wrist from the commandant or the NCAA, should we have no problem with a little griping from the world community. They love us anyway, right?

Oh yeah, we can also be secure that Bush won't raise our taxes regardless of any circumstance. He wouldn't LIE to us would he.

I'm sure Gov. Bill Clements never did.

Jack Perdue '89

Where do grad fees go?

EDITOR:

We applied to graduate school within the last two months. We were both charged \$25 to apply. The application says no fee is required to apply to the graduate college and the 1987-88 graduate catalog mentions nothing about an application fee. When we asked about this, the secretary said that these were application forms.

We would like to know why a state-supported school requires a fee to apply to grad school and where does the money go?

We thought application fees were indigenous to the private institutions of state. Is this a processing fee? No fee is charged to apply to Texas A&M as an undergraduate. Is it more difficult to process the graduate application than the undergraduate application, or is this just another method to milk students for money?

Kenneth M. Dorsett '88
Edmund M. Parker II '89

Thanks from Student Y

EDITOR:

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all those people who helped with mocktails at the Mocktail Tables last Monday for National Collegiate Alcohol Awareness Week. Thanks to the efforts of the Members of the Student Y Association, Circle K International and BACCHUS and the donation of drinks from the TAMU Food Services, we were able to serve mocktails to approximately 2,550 students, faculty and staff as well as project the message of responsible drinking to the University community.

Dave Mendoza '88
President, Student Y Association

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

The Battalion

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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.

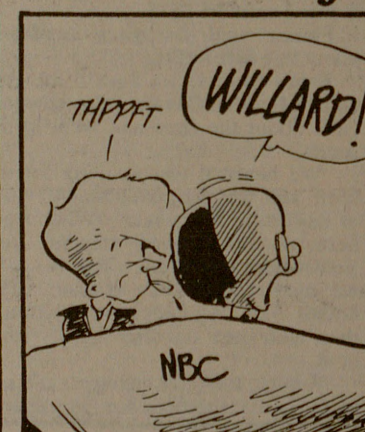
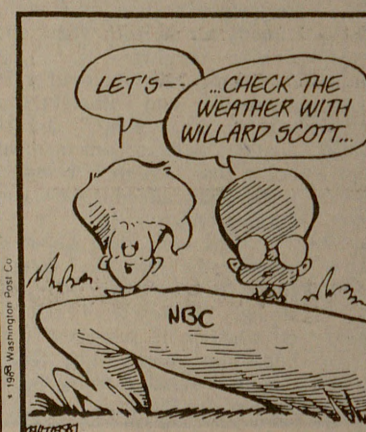
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