

Chinks were evident in the 'Camelot' armor

On Tuesday a nation will gloriously remember a president whose most memorable moment was a dark November day in Dallas, 25 years ago. There will be news reports, biographies and television specials lauding the triumphs of the only Catholic president and the youngest ever elected to the position.

Yet I intend to make the case that we over-glorify Kennedy's years as president.

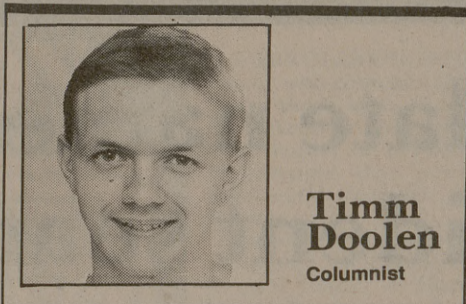
When I think of the accomplishments of the presidents of this half-century, I think of Lyndon Johnson with his civil rights reforms and struggle for a Great Society, Nixon with his opening of China and the national cancer program, Carter with his negotiating the peace treaty between Israel and Egypt and Ronald Reagan with the INF treaty and making America militarily and economically strong again.

When I think of Kennedy, I think of his positive expansion of the space program — a significant achievement for any president. He also established the Agency for International Development, which delivered economic aid to the world, and the Peace Corps, an organization that gives worldwide humanitarian aid.

These are great accomplishments that in retrospect we praise, but as a nation we tend to forget that his plans for federal aid to education, urban renewal, a higher minimum wage and medical care for the aged were halted in Congress. His economic plan to lower taxes and thus increase individual earnings went nowhere as well. In other words, he wasn't a dramatic leader of Congress, and few of his ideological ideas turned into legislation.

Ironically, the man who wanted to spread America's influence all over the world, claimed solely domestic triumphs. During his nearly three years as president, Kennedy worked the United States into a compromised position with relationship to the world.

One of the Kennedy's campaign issues was American intervention in Cuba. At the end of his administration, Eisenhower began training Cuban exiles for a Cuban invasion. Kennedy authorized the mission and gave the several thousand revolutionaries equipment, transportation and limited air cover. JFK played a delicate game of trying to have the troops win, but not show overt American support in the process. He failed miserably on both counts.



Timm Doolen
Columnist

Soon after landing at the Bay of Pigs, the exiles were crushed by Castro and the world knew that America was behind the invasion. Kennedy himself admitted he had made a terrible mistake.

Kennedy had the vision that America should get tough with the Soviet Union, so we started building more nuclear missiles. Before 1961, there was little evidence that the U.S.S.R. wanted to escalate the arms race. But after Kennedy began building many more weapons, the Soviet Union had no choice but to respond, which started the ongoing arms race.

On August 13, 1961, as a by-product of the U.S.'s tensions with the Soviet Union, Krushchev walled in East Berlin. Some historians theorize that if Americans had torn down the barbed wire

(later replaced by stone after American passiveness), the Soviets might have conceded Berlin to the West. But Kennedy backed down from his lofty words, and a million people were annexed into the Soviet regime.

It is speculated that had Kennedy not let the Soviets get away with Berlin, they would not have tried to export missiles to Cuba a year later. The Cuban Missile Crisis, which brought the world close to nuclear war, is perceived by many as an American victory. But the Cuban Missile Crisis effectively established Cuba as an outpost of the Soviet Union.

In August of 1962, the Soviet Union began building medium-range ballistic missile sites in Cuba. The Joint Chiefs of Staff wanted a full military strike on Cuba, but on the advice of his brother, Robert Kennedy, JFK ordered only a naval blockade. The President demanded that Krushchev remove all offensive weapons from Cuba. A deal was struck that kept Soviet missiles out of Cuba (until 1978) but allowed just about anything else in, making Cuba a Soviet satellite and fatally wounding the Monroe Doctrine.

The last significant foreign affairs decision made by John Kennedy was to

send his Green Berets and thousands of other troops to Vietnam. Under Kennedy administration, the real Vietnam began — a war that we have won, but embarrassingly failed to do. Kennedy gradually escalated the number of troops in Vietnam, a policy that Lyndon Johnson continued. At the end of the Eisenhower administration there were a few hundred military advisers in Vietnam; by John Kennedy's death, there were 15,000 troops and their equipment to match.

Kennedy may have been a victim of circumstances or bad timing. Even if he did have many undeniable failures during his presidency, despite our tendency to hold him as an idol in our mind, he was an eloquent speaker, and someone of an ideologue. But when the time came to get things done on the international scene, he fell somewhat short.

This week and next, as we remember the death of John F. Kennedy on his 25th anniversary, let us keep in mind his triumphs and his failures, but not over-glorify his presidency. Keep in good respect his significant history.

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

Confessions of a former fanatic

I never thought it would happen to me. I always thought my faith was strong enough to prevent anything like this. Every Sunday, like clockwork, I participated in the ceremonies — that is, until one day last winter when I began to question myself. It was frightening, because it had become so important in my life. How would I survive?

Last winter as I sat there watching and listening, I said to myself, "What's the point?"

I sat up and slapped myself (then added a couple because it felt so good). What was I saying?!!!

I had questioned the validity of sports.

For years I had been nothing short of obsessed with sports viewing. Football, basketball, baseball, hockey, then the television news sports and CNN's Sportsnight at 2 a.m. When Sunday rolled around I had about 50 pages of sports sections from the two Dallas papers to envelope myself in.

After I knocked my Armchair Quarterback Kit off the couch, I realized that all this time I had been making fun of people, mostly females, for ignoring sports. What I hadn't realized was that I didn't understand their point of view. Suddenly, all the arguments I used to laugh at hysterically became only slightly amusing.

Arguments like, "Why would anybody want to waste their time trying to put a ball through a circle? If they have such a hard time, why don't they use a smaller ball or a bigger circle?"

"Why do they keep score? Why don't they just play for fun? And who decides how much everything is worth?"

Now don't get me wrong, I still watch sports occasionally. But nowhere near what I used to. Here was a typical Sunday before my revelation.

9:30 a.m. — Roll out of bed. Collect the sports pages and funnies (you mean they print other parts?) from the two Dallas papers. Read and memorize every article in each sports section and the



Steve Masters
Columnist

score in every college football game the day before, including Division II games.

10:30 a.m. — Before I could finish the funnies, it was time for NFL Magazine on the local CBS affiliate (no influence from that communist organization known as Cable TV). Not to be missed. That Steve Sabol really cracks me up.

11 a.m. — The Week in Football, also on CBS and a definite must-see to recall the previous week's bone-crushing action. I held a wake when the voice of NFL Films, John Facinda, passed away a few years back.

11:30 a.m. — Brent, Irv, Phyllis (or Jayne) and Jimmy on that old standby, the NFL Today. How much would you pay for this cast? But wait! If you act now with a VCR, you can tape NFL Live! with Bob Costas. Now how much would you pay? Don't answer yet because at noon it's...

GAME TIME! I'm planted in front of TV with enough junk food so I'll never have to get up, even during the commercials. I might miss one of those IBM "You Make The Call" commercials.

Since my revelation though, Sundays have been a lot less hectic, and the brain cells I once used for Division II football scores I now use to store the intellectually stimulating lyrics of Metallica, DJ Jazzy Jeff and the Fresh Prince, and The Smiths.

Here's my usual Sunday schedule now:

9:30 a.m. — Wake up with alcohol-induced flashback. Roll over and go back to sleep.

10:30 a.m. — Hear roommate and neighbors getting up to watch NFL Magazine. Go back to sleep.

Noon — Get up. Take shower and let hair dry however it wants. (I figure it will anyway, just like in the picture.)

12:30 p.m. — Go downstairs and don't read paper we can't afford to subscribe to. Glance at TV screen and see how bad the Cowboys are losing. Mumble hello to my glazed-eyed, violence-crazed roommate who can't hear anybody but John Madden.

12:45 p.m. — Go to work. You'd probably think the problem would end there, but since we have two TVs with cable hooked up here at the *Batt*, they are in constant use for at least six hours so the staff (usually not sports desk people) won't be disconnected from their favorite teams for even a moment.

I should have learned my lesson my freshman year when I tried to take part in scalping tickets to the Cowboys' home opener against the Washington Redskins. I took a bath on that one, losing about \$50 on 10 tickets. But did I learn? Noooooo.

I should have learned when I asked women out to attend sporting events. I know this doesn't hold true for everyone, but it's my experience that women rank sporting events just above being stranded in the Alaskan wilderness without any toilet paper. Shocking, but true.

I still watch or listen to Aggie football every Saturday, even when Jackie leaves Bucky in too long. I have been known to take in a basketball game or two, but anything else — no way. Now and then I even (attempt to) play once in a while, but don't tell anybody on our now-defunct 16-inch softball team.

So the next time you take your date to the game and she (or he — males are guilty of sports ignorance too) asks, "Now how many points is it for a home run?" just grit your teeth and think about being stuck in Alaska with no toilet paper — you'll be able to relate.

Steve Masters is a senior journalism major, senior staff writer and a columnist for The Battalion.

Mail Call

Protect yourselves, Aggies

EDITOR:

Last week, one of my dearest friends was sexually molested at night on campus. It appears that she was simply studying in a building when a man entered the room she was in and proceeded to partake in certain sexual acts with himself, well as forcing himself upon her. Had it not been for some people coming, another rape might have occurred.

To the women of Texas A&M, I beg of you, please do whatever you must to protect yourself. Realize that A&M is not all 'howdys' and good bull, but that it is a place where you must watch your step at all times. I pray that this type of violence happens no more. But being realistic, I know it will. Please do not allow it to be you.

To the committers of such crimes, you have only so long to continue. Know that when threatened, people will respond with whatever is necessary to stay alive and protect those whom they love. In the end, if you are not caught, you are caught because God is and shall be the creator of your fate.

And to you, the white male approximately 5-foot-10, slim build, with a short moustache and slightly wavy hair parted on the side, you may or may not have been reported, but in reality I have just reported you. So now everyday, men and women alike will look at you with curiosity, wondering if you are the sick individual who wrecks the lives of females. Don't forget, one day someone will be sure that it is you. And you might choose to start praying then, but it will be a short prayer as you just might meet God sooner than you thought. Not a threat, just a reminder.

J. Frank Hernandez '91

One person can make difference

EDITOR:

I rarely pick up a copy of *The Battalion* and after reading Timm Doolen's Nov. 9 column, I'm sorry I did. Mr. Doolen doesn't think it's necessary to vote because we are so insignificant, relative to the size of the machine.

Curiously, Mr. Doolen thinks his opinion matters enough that we have to read it. He also thinks enough of himself to avoid jury duty or to ignore local politics because he isn't affected directly. Mr. Doolen also thinks he should be free to criticize the government and take care of more important issues on election day such as birthdays and fishing trips.

Mr. Doolen — the world, this country, this community and this campus consists of more than just you. There are issues greater than you that can be influenced by your action or your vote. Sit back now and let everyone know that life for you couldn't be better, but what about tomorrow. Our nuclear arsenal builds exponentially, our environment can no longer keep pace with our waste, but you sit back and smile and say that not casting a ballot is a sign everything is OK.

Maybe one vote won't dramatically influence the polls relative to 80 million people, but one voice can make a difference. Our history is filled with great people who have made a difference — Thomas Jefferson, Abraham Lincoln and Martin Luther King, for example. Your apparent idol, Dr. Portis, convinced you not to vote, but he could have easily convinced people that their vote did count, and could make a difference. Perhaps Mr. Doolen, you would do well to think more of yourself and be less glib about the gleam in Dr. Portis' eye as he makes "fools" of your classmates.

Russell Davies
Graduate student

Letters to the editor should not exceed 300 words in length. The editorial staff reserves the right to edit letters for 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.

The Battalion

(USPS 045 360)

Member of
Texas Press Association
Southwest Journalism Conference

The Battalion Editorial Board

Lydia Berzensyi, Editor
Becky Weisenfels, Managing Editor
Anthony Wilson, Opinion Page Editor
Richard Williams, City Editor
D A Jensen,
Denise Thompson, News Editors
Hal Hammons, Sports Editor
Jay Janner, Art Director
Leslie Guy, Entertainment Editor

Editorial Policy

The Battalion is a non-profit, self-supporting newspaper operated as a community service to Texas A&M and Bryan-College Station. Opinions expressed in *The Battalion* are those of the editorial board or the author, and do not necessarily represent the opinions of Texas A&M administrators, faculty or the Board of Regents.

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 77843-1111.

BLOOM COUNTY

by Berke Breathed

