

## Mail Call

### Keep religion out of the classroom

EDITOR:

In the Jan. 19 issue of *The Battalion*, Murray Moore and Floyd Osborne both wrote letters that defended the professors who feel the need to share their religious beliefs in the classroom. Murray, people who are in love with someone may talk about the object of their affection, but the classroom is not the place to do so. As inappropriate as a professor discussing his or her sex life in class is the discussion of his or her religion. The ideas that these professors express are of interest only to those who share the beliefs of Christianity.

Mr. Osborne, you seem to think that an individual's religious beliefs are indicative of their teaching ability. I do not believe this is true.

Also, both of you are not taking into account the fact that not all of the students at Texas A&M University are Christian. It is not fair for the professors and students of this secular, state university to expect non-Christians to endure Christian ideas in the classroom. There are representatives of Jewish, Muslim, Hindu and other faiths at Texas A&M. Although many religious denominations encourage the sharing of their faith, as citizens (and visitors) of this country we are also obligated to live by the principles embodied in the U.S. Constitution, including the separation of church and state.

Jeffrey L. Zimring '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.

## Grobnik discusses leveraged buyouts

Mike Royko

Columnist

Slate Grobnik looked up from his paper and said: "Do you understand this big buyout deal with the cigarette company?"

You mean RJR Nabisco.

"Yeah. I guess besides cigarettes, they make cookies, too. If they don't kill you with smoke, they do it by getting you fat. But do you understand the deal?"

Vaguely. There are several groups trying to buy it. And they're all offering more than \$20 billion.

"I know that. But do any of them have \$20 billion in their pockets? I didn't know anybody had that much money, except some Japanese or Arabs."

No, they don't have that kind of money. They leverage it.

"You mean they borrow it."

Yes, that's another way of putting it.

"Then why don't they say 'borrow' instead of 'leverage'? If I ask the bartender to let me have \$20 until payday, I don't ask him to leverage me. He'd think I was asking for help getting off the stool and he'd cut me off."

Well, that's the way the big money people talk.

"I think they talk that way because they don't want mopes like me to know what they're doing, because the country might have a nervous breakdown. I mean, the stories I read don't say something like this: 'Three different groups of greedy guys say they are borrowing billions of dollars at crazy interest rates to buy a company that makes cigarettes and cookies, so they can start selling off pieces of the company to cover the interest on the money they borrowed, and cutting the payroll and maybe putting a lot regular mopes out of work, and if they pull it off they'll all wind up with a fat profit.'"

It's more complex than that.

"Yeah, I know. Like it don't say that I'm footing part of the bill because those guys can write the interest on those big loans off their tax bills. So if they don't pay taxes on it, that means the government's going to get it from somewhere else. And I'm part of the somewhere else. How come they can write off that interest and I can't write off interest when I buy a car?"

Congress, in its wisdom, has given them this loophole. I suppose it stimulates growth or something.

"Borrowing that kind of money at juice-man rates don't stimulate nothing but my blood pressure. You know what I think? I think that one of these days, they're going to foreclose on this whole country. They're going to repossess the whole thing, from sea to shining sea."

Who's going to do that?

"Who? The people we're going to owe all the money to. I mean, if everybody is borrowing, somebody's lending. And that's all anybody's doing. These buyout guys are borrowing and we're helping them foot the bill. So the government has to borrow money from foreigners and pay interest. And every year, more of my money goes for finance charges. But I can't even go in a bank and get \$50 until payday."

But this system must be good because we're living well.

"Oh, yeah, we're living well. Just like Knock Knees Tony used to live well. Remember him from the neighborhood?"

A sad case.

"Sure, he lived well. All the time a new car, flashy clothes, throwing money around like a good-time Charlie. Then the guys he's borrowing money from come around and say: 'Tony, you ain't paid the juice on your loans.' He says: 'Catch me next week.' They says: 'That's what you said last week, and the week before that.' And that's when he got the nickname Knock Knees Tony. He's still got the Louisville Slugger marks on both knees, you know that?"

Our national economy can't be compared to borrowing money from juice men.

"No, it's worse. Knock Knees brought it on himself. But I'm just an innocent bystander. Why should I get repossessed?"

But you won't.

"Why not? Every year we're paying more and more juice. Pretty soon, everything we got is going to be going out in juice to other countries. That means we can't spend it on things we need here. So we borrow more and pay more juice. Then they come in and buy more of the country. That's what I mean by getting repossessed. One day they show up at the White House and knock on the door and say: 'You missed the payments. Here's your eviction notice.'"

That's not the way high finance works.

"High finance, low finance, it's all the same. When you borrow, somebody is shelling it out and some day you got to pay up. You know what I think George Bush ought to do?"

What?

"He ought to give Knock Knees Tony a job."

What kind of job could he give that dummy?

"Chief economics adviser."

What does Tony know?

"Nothing. But every time the new deficit figures come out, Tony could pull up his pants legs and show Bush those Louisville Slugger marks."

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### The Battalion

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## College memories are valuable

I was in the office of one of my journalism instructors the other day getting some words of wisdom on how to spot an interesting topic. It sounds simple, but you would be surprised.

Interesting topics are elusive creatures. What's interesting to some may not elicit the slightest bit of interest from others. I suppose if I had some weird fascination with the mating ritual of the Gambian Gnu, I could write about that. Of course, that could well be the last column I ever write for *The Battalion*.

As it is, I have never had more than a passing interest in the mating ritual of the Gambian Gnu.

My instructor and I finished our little discussion and I rose to make my exit. This particular instructor, who never seems to be stationary for a minute, spun out of the doorway ahead of me. "Isn't school fun?" he asked.

"Yes Dr. Starr, I find myself saying that all the time," I replied.

"So make it a topic for one of your columns!" he said. And he blew out of sight.

For one brief, fleeting moment his suggestion went unnoticed. But then the proverbial wheels creaked into motion. My first thought was that the idea stunk.

Anyone who thinks school is fun is probably still leaving a little something for the tooth fairy under their pillow every night.

When I think of school, a plethora of adjectives comes to mind. Fun just doesn't happen to be one of them.

The first thing that comes to mind is the 40,000 other A&M students who are sharing this uniquely American experience with me.

I'm just sure Texas A&M University is trying to set a record — sort of like trying to see how many people will fit into a phone booth.

Never mind that it means servicing the needs of students in a classroom the size of the Roman Forum.

Never mind that probably the only



Stephanie Stribling

Columnist

contact students have with their professors occurs when they run into them in the produce section at Safeway.

Never mind that all that dialing and redialing for add/drops has resulted in a splint on your index finger. (I must say, however, getting frustrated and angry in your own home is infinitely more fun than it is in a line extending from the Pavilion to downtown Bryan.)

Never mind that the class you spent hours registering for, because you heard the professor was spectacular, is now being conducted by "robo-prof" — one of those quasi-professors they call teaching assistants. Even if they speak English, they probably don't know what to say.

Never mind that the only textbook every bookstore in town is out of happens to be the only one you really need. And you didn't find this out until you spent two hours waiting in a line somewhere. This was after you tried calling first, but they all said they couldn't give information on availability of textbooks over the phone during the first week of school (the only time you'll be needing that information).

Only when you're in school can you be certain beyond a shadow of a doubt that there's always something you forgot to do — that insipid little voice inside your head that says as it hits the pillow every night, "Yoo-hoo, weren't you supposed to read one more chapter in your history book?"

Or just as you walk out the door headed for Northgate it says, "Yoo-hoo, do you really think this is the most effective way to utilize your time? You know

you could be getting a head start on research paper."

God bless nine-to-five...

One other thing comes to mind. I think of school. It's a simple one. I'm sure many of you know well, called on-campus parking.

Fifty years from now, when your diploma has yellowed and cracked, the crisp, clean engraving on my ring has worn down to a series of places, I'll reflect back on my four years at Texas A&M University.

I am certain the most vivid memory will be of me in my little Toyota, frantically racing up and down the parking lot with one single objective in mind: location of a 7 by 15 foot hole in the pavement to plant my vehicle, all the while muttering something about the time.

I'll have other memories too. I'll have memories:

Of the philosophy professor, who tore away the veil of my ignorance, exposed me to the insights and revelations of some of the world's great minds...

Of the history professor, who read a mediocre essay because he knew I could do better. It was the most fought, well-deserved "A" I earned. In the process he showed that achievement is limitless if you choose to make it so...

Of my triad of biology professors, who showed me another way of looking at the world. They helped ignite a flame in me that grew to be a desire for knowledge...

Of the countless other instructors whom I have both idolized and despised. Each in their own way, both positive and negative, they have shown how to become the person I want to be.

I suspect these are the memories I'll carry for a lifetime — the little incidents that will all too soon be forgotten.

Dr. Starr, you were right — school is fun.

Stephanie Stribling is a senior journalism major and a columnist for *The Battalion*.

## SIGNS OF THE MILLENNIUM:



## Skinny people need diets too

Everybody and his fat sister-in-law is trying to lose weight.

I must see 15 different diet programs advertised during just one night of television.

That's fine, but aren't there some people out there who want to gain weight? I see skinny people everyday.

These people look pale, sickly, and underfed — they couldn't be happy looking like that.

But nobody helps them. Nobody offers a gain-weight diet. At least I haven't seen one, so I've decided to help.

I phoned an old schoolmate of mine, the former Cordie Mae Poovey, who still weighs more than the mobile home in which she lives with her devoted husband, Hog Philpott.

(Hog's no lightweight himself. Down at Mudd's Gulf, where he works, they refer to Hog as "Al." Al as in Alps.)

As for Cordie Mae, the stork didn't bring her. UPS did. It took the entire plane.

Lewis Grizzard

Columnist

Cordie Mae can look at a bowl of mashed potatoes and sprout a new 45-pound arm. She tried to visit Rhode Island once but they wouldn't let her in. There wasn't enough room.

(I would steal Rodney Dangerfield's line here, but I'm not that kind of person. So I'll give him credit for saying he went out with a girl who was so fat that when she wore watches on each of her wrists they were in different time zones.)

I told Cordie Mae of the plight of skinny people and she agreed to share her county-wide, famous "When-Your-Arms-Get-Tired-of-Shoveling-in-the-Food-Then-Eat-With-Your-Feet-Bloating-Diet."

"Just give us a typical daily program," I said.

"I'd be happy to," said Cordie Mae, reaching into her icebox for a quart of lard on which to snack while she dictated her gain-weight diet. Clip and save the following:

Breakfast: a dozen eggs, six chicken rolls, a chocolate cake, then go to Shoney's for the breakfast buffet. Lunch: a jar of mayonnaise, three Wendy's double cheeseburgers, four snowcones, and a gross of Butterfingers. Dinner: a barbecued goat, hold mayo. You've had enough of that lunch.

Following this type of diet too rigidly, however, can be harmful to your health. For this reason, Sundays should be a day of rest. Send your husband's wife out for tacos, and stop by a Chinese place for egg rolls and then to the deli for potato salad and chicken cake. And if a chicken walks through your house, knock it in the head and in case The Colonel is closed when you need a midnight snack.

Cordie Mae says good luck — and good gaining.

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