

## Mail Call

### Don't condemn art

EDITOR:

Despite Mr. Salisbury's talk of the Dixie Chicken as a gallery, women are not "fine art." This is a term applied to objects, to things; women just happen to be people. I hope you can see the difference.

Now, while Mr. Salisbury was right in saying that art appreciation is something that comes from inside, this doesn't mean that an "art appreciation" class could not help you enjoy art more. A class would expose you to works from many different periods and classes of art, and would give you a chance to learn what kind of art you like. It would also give you something to compare other works against.

Just because you, Mr. Salisbury, dislike modern sculpture doesn't mean you should condemn fine arts as a whole.

The whole point of fine arts is to expose you to all the aspects of our diverse world, whether you like it or not. Fine arts tries to give you an open mind about everything and force you to drop your prejudices.

Despite the fact that you probably thought yourself very clever when you implied a connection between art and homosexuality, and probably thought it was a brilliant piece of "guilt by association," in truth you only proved you've no idea of what art is about and that you live in the everyone-not-like-me-is-wrong past.

Try to act a little more sophisticated in the futur — meaning you should hide your ignorance, not display it proudly in *The Battalion*.

A&M needs a fine arts department if for no other reason than to give those who want to learn about art a little exposure to it.

At best, a fine arts department could bring all of A&M into the open-minded '80s, and could move A&M one step closer to being a "world-class university."

Mike Freeman '91

### Give Duke a chance

EDITOR:

A few nights ago as I was watching Nightline, I became somewhat disturbed. The guest was David Duke, who, as we all know, was a former Ku Klux Klan member and recently was elected to the Louisiana House of Representatives.

The very fact that the Klan was a part of his past should have (and has) raised very serious questions concerning his moral and ethical character.

Some of the things Mr. Duke said sounded quite familiar. He spoke of how affirmative action has gone too far and how whites are subject to being skipped over for job promotions and scholarships simply because of the color of their skin. He also mentioned how there is a tremendous swelling of welfare recipients, both black and white, that is bankrupting this nation.

These are all very serious issues that deserve very serious reasoning.

However, the fact that this man possesses such a sordid past has overshadowed what he is trying to say.

Now, I know I will be lambasted by accusations of bigotry and racism, but these charges simply aren't true.

I deplore racism in all its forms and am as unbogoted as a man can get. I simply believe a man's past is his past. If he proves he truly doesn't harbor feelings of hatred anymore, he has a right to be listened to. If this weren't true, then such former radicals as Jesse Jackson and Jane Fonda would still be scowled upon today.

If, however, he still possesses these unjust qualities, then he should be impeached and removed quickly and with no remorse.

Mr. Duke and his constituents cannot be ignored. This is still a democracy and it seems the people he represents have spoken. Neither the Republican party nor those claiming to boycott the House proceedings have the right to deny the people in this particular Louisiana district their constitutional rights in the legislative process.

To refuse to work with Mr. Duke would be a travesty against the entire concept of democracy.

What it boils down to is the dream of a truly equal America where people are judged on their minds and abilities, not the color of their skin.

The great Martin Luther King wanted it this way and with God's will, someday it will be.

Freddy Calhoun '90

### Be grateful for what you have

EDITOR:

Have we lost the sense of pride in our country? At the military review on Feb. 25, the national anthem was played. From a respectful position of attention, one could see several groups of people remaining seated or running around playing.

They should have been able to hear the music because it was played by the Fightin' Texas Aggie Band which made it both loud and unmistakable. So, why didn't they stand quietly and respectfully until the anthem's finish?

Why is it when the flag is being raised or lowered on the quad or at the Academic Building, people don't stop and stand still until the flag is completely raised or lowered?

Finally, when Taps is played every night in recognition of the soldiers who have fought and died for this country, why do people continue to walk and talk as if nothing is going on around them. Try being aware of the little honors paid to this country.

It might make you a little more grateful for what you've been given.

Carmen Goyette '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.

## You can call me 'Crash'

Let's talk about cars — or more specifically, mishaps in cars.

I have a particular interest in this subject right now because I was in a fender-bender last weekend.

The story starts with a group of nine Batt-staffers on the road and yucking it up. We were headed for Louisiana, Creole country, Cajun land.

A journalism conference in Baton Rouge had our names on it, and we were excited. Fiona drove the lead car — a Porsche. I was driving my car in the middle and Wade was following in his truck.

We were a caravan and we were having fun, especially since we got to see every run-down restroom between here and Baton Rouge.

Then, in some obscure town in front of a dilapidated convenience store, IT happened. I smacked into the back end of Fiona's Porsche.

In later conversations, my dad would ask me WHY oh WHY did I decide to hit a PORSCHE? Why couldn't I pick a Volkswagen or a Chevy or something?

I don't have an answer — but if I could go back and do it again, I am sure I would be more careful and check sticker prices before I accelerated and smacked a car.

Anyway, we all piled out of the cars and gathered around the injured bumper. By the way, my car was fine — no bumps, no dents, no scratches. I



Becky Weisenfels  
Editor

know you are glad to hear that. Of course, my car would have cost less to fix, but that was a moot point at this stage of the game.

The Porsche's bumper, on the other hand, was broken. And I do mean broken. We are talking about a split in a metal bumper — like when you take a straight pipe and bend it.

I had a foreboding feeling about this trip, and was I ever right. I just don't get along with cars that well. Not that I have had a lot of wrecks — just one (on police records). That one involved smoke, a delivery lady and cotton candy.

Off the record, I have backed into my dad's car, swiped a bed with my mother's car (don't ask) and run over every curb from here to Boston in my brother's truck.

I once banged on my ignition switch with a hammer (we had to get it replaced) and jumped a curb to land in the middle of an open field.

It's not just the little mishaps, though. I get tickets — lots of them.

When I first started attending A&M, I could not make a trip home without getting a ticket for speeding, passing in a no-passing zone or spitting out the window.

When my brother started coming to A&M, my parents put him in charge of me on the trips home. If we drove together, he was supposed to keep an eye on my speedometer. If we drove separate vehicles, I heard my parents tell him to "drive in front of her and DON'T LET HER PASS YOU."

So I was reduced to a dependent driver, and it worked. No more tickets.

I began taking the trips on my own. I went for quite a while without a ticket (we are, of course, not counting A&M parking tickets). It had been a few months and I was feeling lucky.

Until last weekend, until the Porsche predicament.

Fiona took it all very well. She said she wasn't angry (while she gritted her teeth). I was embarrassed and upset (for 10 minutes — but I wasn't going to let it totally ruin my weekend).

So we took pictures (journalism majors always have a camera in the car) and got back on the road.

The best picture is of me, Fiona and the bumper — it's hanging on my office door. If you care to come up and look, you can see the crack in the bumper. I'm laughing and Fiona looks, well... unhappy.

Becky Weisenfels is a senior journalism major and editor of *The Battalion*.

## If you plan to sue someone, do it in the United States



Mike Royko  
Columnist

Americans sometimes take for granted how fortunate we are to live in this country. Despite our many severe problems — crime, drugs, racial strife and Morton Downey Jr. — we still have a good deal.

And just how good a deal we have, compared with much of the world, was illustrated by a couple of recent court cases.

One of them was in India. The other, in California.

In India, a financial settlement was finally reached between the Indian government and Union Carbide for the worst industrial disaster in history: the Bhopal gas leak.

Union Carbide agreed to pay \$470 million in damages. The Indian government will get the money and try to find a fair way to compensate the families of the 3,329 people who died as a result of a gas leak in 1984.

The money will also be used to help pay the medical expenses of more than 200,000 who were injured, but didn't die.

And presumably, some will go to the families of those who are still dying at the rate of one person a day from the effects of the leak.

Now, \$470 million sounds like a lot of money, and it is.

But if the entire sum were divided only among the families of those who have died — never mind the injured and those who have yet to die — it would come to less than \$150,000 per death.

That would make the families wealthy because %150,000 in India has the buying power of about \$1 million here. Yet, even \$1 million for the death of a loved one would be considered paltry by most American lawyers and juries.

And the fact is, no Indian family will get that much. As I said, about 200,000

people are still sick because of the gas leak. Much of the \$470 million settlement will be spent on their medical expenses.

So by the time the money is spread around, nobody is going to have much to show for all the deaths and suffering.

And that's what I mean about how fortunate we are to be Americans. Even better, a California American.

That's what Marc Christian is. He's also an instant millionaire. At least on paper.

A Los Angeles jury recently awarded Christian more than \$21 million, which is a lot of money even in California.

Christian, 35, didn't die in an industrial accident. Nor is he ill. If anything, the trim, handsome, blond young man appears to be in fine health.

But the jury decided he deserved almost \$22 million because of the anxiety he suffered after he discovered that actor Rock Hudson was dying of AIDS.

He had reason to be worried, since he spent several years living with Hudson as the actor's sex partner and companion.

(Other publications refer to him as Hudson's "lover," but I'm old-fashioned enough to believe that word should be reserved for people who demonstrate that they are truly in love, rather than truly in bed.)

Christian had sued Hudson's estate and the actor's personal secretary because the actor and the secretary failed to warn him that Hudson had AIDS. They persuaded him that Hudson was losing weight and looking haggard because of other reasons, including a bad diet.

So, unaware of the risk, he and Hudson continued their sexual relationship.

It was only when the facts leaked out before Hudson died that Christian discovered the terrible truth.

This is when he suffered fear, anxiety and emotional distress.

Fortunately, Christian tested negatively for AIDS. However, his lawyers argued that he could develop the illness in the future.

So the jury gave him \$14.5 million from Hudson's estate, and another \$7.25 million in punitive damages from Hudson's male secretary for helping keep the nasty secret from him.

The estate and the secretary don't have that kind of money, but if the award holds up under appeal, it will be paid by insurance companies.

Christian and his lawyers hailed the verdict as a legal landmark, saying it could serve as a warning to others that they should not risk giving someone AIDS or they could be sued.

They may be right, but I'm not sure. By now, most homosexuals are informed about AIDS and how they can get it. Most new cases are being transmitted by dope addicts using tainted needles.

So I doubt if anyone will get much money by suing a fellow junkie.

But the two cases provide a remarkable contrast.

In India, thousands are already dead. Thousands more will die. Yet, when the medical bills are paid and the money has been spread around, none of the victims or their survivors will get more than a few thousand dollars from the giant American corporation.

Marc Christian, on the other hand, will receive almost \$22 million for his anxiety, stress and fear.

As I said, it makes one feel lucky to be an American. But not particularly proud.

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