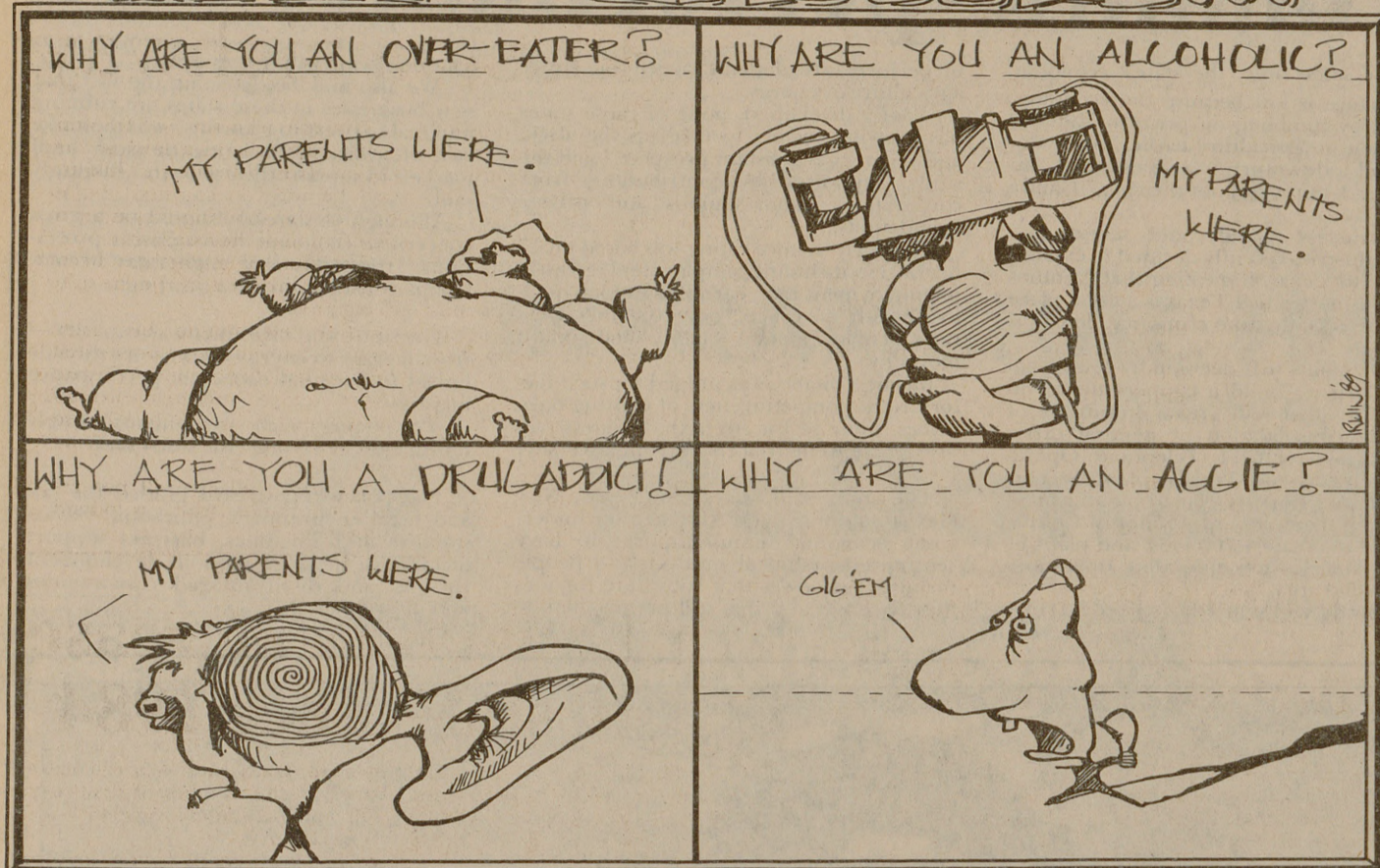


LAME EXCUSES...



Burners rejoice — the day of the tan soon will be over

It happened again. Every year I make a solemn oath that I won't let it happen again — but it did.

I have become another ultraviolet-ray casualty. I am sunburned.

It's an award-winning sunburn, too. I'm not just talking "a little color." No, I'm talking a crimson-red, sizzling-hot, hurts-to-be-alive sunburn. The kind of sunburn that seeps into your very bone marrow, and makes you seriously re-evaluate ever setting foot outside again.

As if the excruciating pain of a sunburn isn't enough, your body further punishes you for your grievous mistake.

You are blessed with an itch that keeps you up at night and scares away most of your friends. (They think you're lying when you assure them it's not contagious.)

For at least a week, you scratch and claw at yourself like some a flea-bitten animal. There's a reason for the itch. Your body wants to assist you in disposing of at least six layers of skin.

For two weeks, you shed your skin, bit by bit. This is the period after a sunburn when you are most likely to be referred to by reptilian names like "snake" and "lizard." And you feel like a reptile. But you look more like a leper.

In addition to physical trauma, a sunburn can also be emotionally devastating for its victims. People with sunburns are often maligned by those who "never burn."

Some of those who never burn are the Aztec-sun-god type, whom I suspect exited the womb with a savage tan. They treat those of us with sunburns like we're genetic defects just because our skin turns red instead of brown. They say things like "Oh, I never burn," which is a statement intended to make a person with a sunburn feel like a bed-wetter.

I have a sneaking suspicion that half of these golden-brown fools have already shed at least six layers of skin during the early part of the season. Their over-inflated egos simply won't let them admit it. Either that, or they've shelled out big bucks to be bombarded by artificial UV rays in a contraption ominously resembling a large metal coffin.



Stephanie Stribling
Columnist

There are others who say they never burn, but it's because they refuse to let their milky-white complexions see the light of day. They are proud of the fact that they don't burn, but the contortions they must go through to achieve this goal are astounding.

These folks are easy to spot on the beach. They arm themselves with a case of sunblock number 37, and wear large-brimmed hats, Elton John sunglasses, long sleeves and long pants. They immediately go indoors the minute they suspect the sun has violated any part of their body.

These are the people most likely to say "I told you so," to someone with a sunburn. They ask questions like:

"You didn't know there's a hole in the ozone layer?"

"How could you not know you looked like a lobster?"

"What do you mean 'It was an accident'?"

Even though you'd like to string these people up by their toenails, you never seem to find a satisfactory answer to their questions. What they don't understand is that most of us who are plagued by repeated sunburns understand the harmful effects of too much sun, and we know how to avoid them. Yet we continue to nuke our epidermis year after year.

That's why I'm convinced this is a sickness. Only sick people repeatedly do things that are bad for them.

I think I'm beginning to understand the psychology of this illness. Since I myself am a repeat sunburn-offender, I have made some thoughtful reflections about what motivates people to do this.

Just as we live in a weight-conscious society, so too is our society tan-conscious.

A hundred years ago, a tan was a symbol of poverty. It meant that you had no choice but to work outside. A lily-white complexion was a sign of affluence.

Today, tans are a sign of affluence. If you have a tan, it means you have time to lounge around by the pool all day instead of working. Therefore, a golden-brown tan is considered attractive.

So we hit the beaches and pools in search of a commercially acceptable tan. Only a small percentage will ever achieve that sought-after savage tan. The rest of us can only make a valiant effort.

We make it a moral imperative to return home with some evidence of a tan. We lay there in the sun and rationalize our avoidance of skin protection:

"I just want to get a little color on my face first."

"I don't feel like I'm getting any sun."

"Gee I didn't notice the sun was out."

You decide to give it another 15 minutes, but that 15 minutes turns into hours, which turns you into a large lobster. You feel like a complete idiot because you realize that you knew better. You manage to give yourself a momentous guilt trip all by yourself — without any help from your mother.

I think this is ludicrous. Enough is enough. I'm going to put a stop to this nonsense right now. I am making a solemn oath that I will never get another sunburn.

One of these days, lily-white will be fashionable again, and I intend to be on the cutting edge of that fashion.

I'm going to the beach next weekend. I will take every precaution necessary to insure I don't get another sunburn.

If, by accident, I do get a sunburn — well, I'll just make sure it doesn't happen again next time.

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

Whose thousand points of light?

Let's have a brief literary quiz. Please, don't run away. It won't be heavy stuff.

I will give you a phrase, and you name the author. If you miss it the first time, don't worry. You get three guesses.

The phrase is: "A thousand points of light."

See? I told you it wouldn't be hard. You said George Bush. You may even know when and where he used it.

The first time was at the Republican convention, when he accepted his party's nomination in a finely crafted speech.

He said: "This is America... a brilliant diversity spread like stars, like a thousand points of light in a broad and peaceful sky."

And he used it again in his inaugural address when he said: "I have spoken of 'a thousand points of light' of all the community organizations that are spread like stars throughout the nation, doing good."

So if you identified the author of that phrase as George Bush, uh, sorry, but you're wrong.

But you have two more guesses, so try again.

If you are a student of politics, a Washington insider, or a political journalist, I know what you're saying. You probably had it as your first guess.

Peggy Noonan, right? Ms. Noonan is an outstanding political speech writer, and it's generally acknowledged that she wrote Bush's acceptance speech.

The White House press office won't come right out and say that she wrote the "thousand points of light" phrase. But a White House source says, yes, she did.

So if you guessed that Ms. Noonan authored the "thousand points of light" phrase, sorry, you're wrong, too.

But don't feel bad. I would have flunked my own quiz. My first guess would have been Ms. Noonan, since I knew she wrote the speech.

I knew it couldn't have originated with President Bush, because he would have been more likely to say: "I want to tell you about this points of lights thing. We have about one thousand of them. They represent this goodness thing."

So you have one more guess. Take your time. You have three more seconds.

Give up?

The answer was provided for me by an irate and sharp-eyed man named Ray Riley, who lives in Seekonk, Mass.

Mr. Riley says: "I would like to suggest that George Bush's main campaign theme was borrowed unlawfully, in other words plagiarized."

"The definition of plagiarism is to

Mike Royko
Columnist

steal and pass off the ideas or words of others as one's own; use without crediting the source; to commit literary theft; present as new and original an idea or product derived from an existing work."

And what is this existing work? Actually, there are two. Both are books written by novelist Thomas Wolfe, who died in 1938.

In "You Can't Go Home Again" Wolfe describes America this way: (the italics are mine.)

"It's your pasture now, and it's not so big — only three thousand miles from east to west, only two thousand miles from north to south — but all between, where ten thousand points of light prick out the cities, towns and villages, there seeker, you will find us burning in the night."

OK, I concede that Wolfe saw 10,000 points of light, while Bush-Noonan saw only 1,000 points of light.

But wait. We then have Wolfe writing in "The Web and The Rock" about a character's longing to be back in his home.

Wolfe wrote: "And instantly he would see the town below now, coiling in a thousand fumes of homely smoke, now winking into a thousand points of friendly light..." Because of this, the irate Mr. Riley said:

"The political right has heaped praise on Bush for his points of light theme, calling it brilliant and visionary. There's nothing brilliant, nothing visionary, nothing even remotely admirable about stealing."

Oh, I don't know.

Assuming that Bush-Noonan did plunder the thousand points of light from Thomas Wolfe, they should at least be credited with having good taste. Wolfe isn't easy to read, but he's generally accepted as something of a literary genius.

So in that regard, Bush has already moved beyond Ronald Reagan, who plucked many of his lines and anecdotes from old B-movies.

And if they did lift from Wolfe, they should also be credited with being clever. Only Mr. Riley noticed.

Of course, it's possible Ms. Noonan or even Bush thought up the 1,000 points of light theme on their own.

I tried to reach Ms. Noonan to ask, but she's hard to find. The White House wouldn't give me her phone number or ask her to call.

But maybe I'll talk to her sometime. I know she's out there somewhere. Like that thousand points of light thing.

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Mail Call

OK to be gay

EDITOR:

I am writing in reaction to all the responses that I have received since the article about homophobia appeared the Mar. 1 issue of *The Battalion*.

I really do not expect anyone to change their views nor do I ask them to. For those who think I am expressing things they do not like at their own expense, may I remind them that they can make the decision not to read what they dislike. I do not feel guilty about anything that I believe in or value.

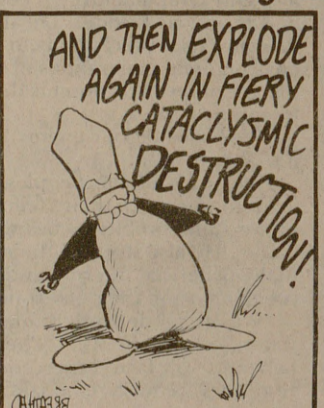
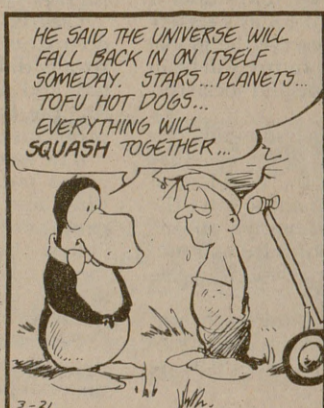
I do interviews to try to reach those individuals who may need support. I will continue to be a thorn in the sides of individuals who close their eyes and ears to things they dislike, because I know that there is a positive side that comes from Gay Student Services being in the public eye.

Finally, I would like to thank everyone for their opinions — no matter how shallow some of them may be.

Eduardo Casas
President, Gay Student Services

*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.

BLOOM COUNTY



by Berke Breathed

The Battalion

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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.

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