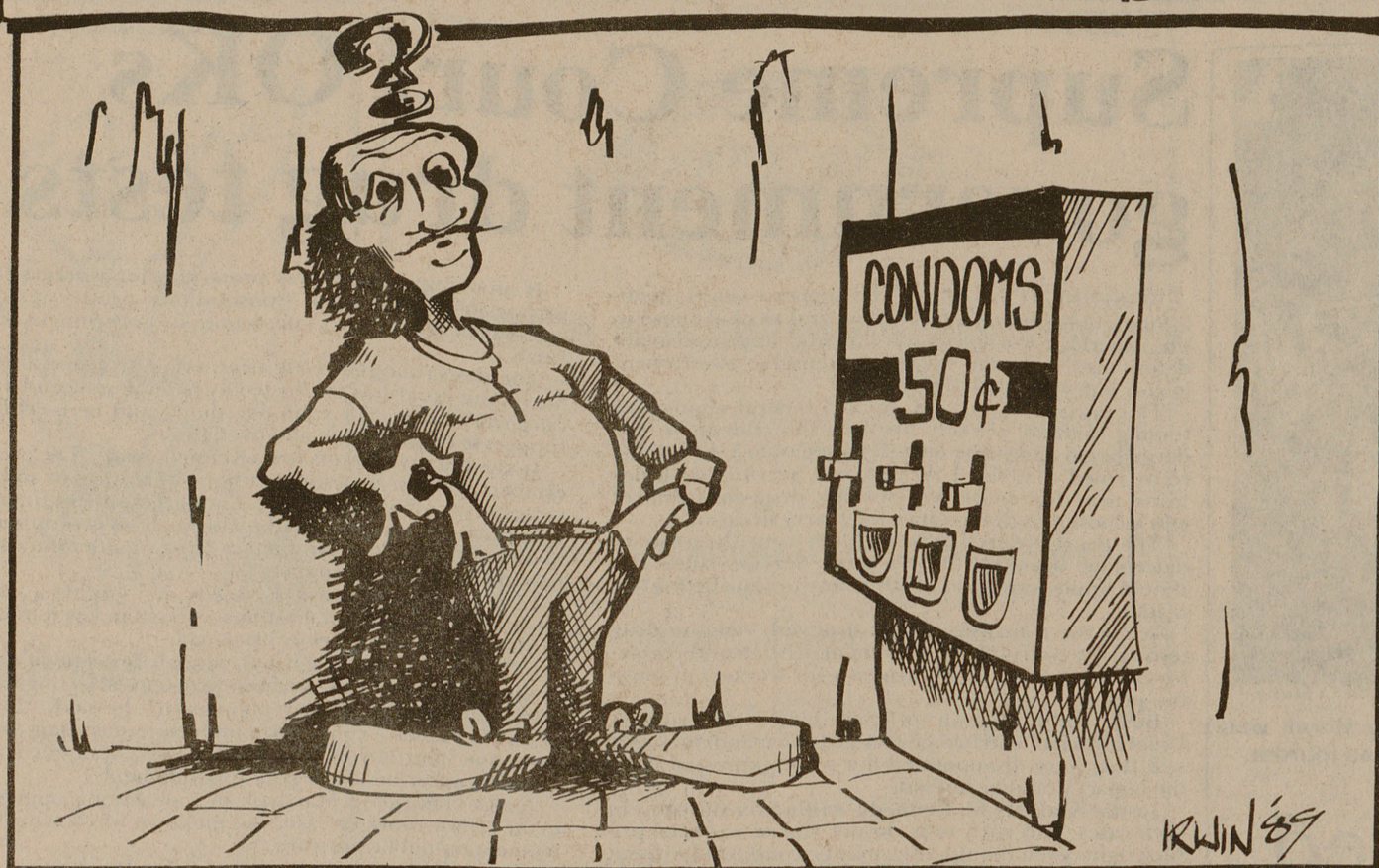


SHORTLY BEFORE THE CONCEPTION OF POPE JOHN PAUL.



Mail Call

Save the oaks

EDITOR:

A couple of weeks ago I was at the Facilities Building to see a model of the new aerospace building being built in the northeast part of campus. I also saw a model of the proposed additions to the MSC.

First, let me say that I am happy to see growth and expansion occur on our campus. It indicates Texas A&M's movement into the future. I am upset because the proposals for the MSC, as presently planned, will cost us a valued tradition: the loss of our Rudder Live Oak!

The Rudder Live Oak is located near the northeast corner of the MSC. The oak has been saved from destruction once before, by J. Earl Rudder. When the MSC was expanded in years past, this live oak was supposed to be cut down. Mr. Rudder discovered this and issued memoranda, and the plans were changed to save the oak. Since that day of salvation, the oak has been known as the Rudder Oak.

The architects and administrative personnel planning the MSC expansion have chosen to minimize this fact. The tree will be cut or an attempt will be made to move it. This is not the only tree that will be destroyed or moved. In all there are 17 trees, ranging in trunk diameters of 10-42 inches, that will be removed from the MSC area.

What will happen to our precious shade and beautiful old oaks? What do we get in return? An open, hot, paved plaza. Boy, I'll bet you can't wait to congregate there in May or September at noon!

There are many reasons to save the Rudder Oak and other trees at the MSC.

J. Earl Rudder thought so, and look how we are regarding his wisdom, courage and tenacity.

David A. Kenyon '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.

Aggie Band just doesn't know when to stop playing

The Aggie Band has never embarrassed me before. But I guess there's a first time for everything.

The behavior of Lt. Col. Joe T. Haney and his charges at the Southwest Conference Postseason Classic, March 10 and 11 was pathetic. I would have expected such actions from any other band in the conference, but I always have considered our men as being beyond reproach. It was a rude awakening.

For those of you who were not present that weekend (and that, by the way would involve practically all of you, but that's another story), let me set the scene for you.

The conference basketball tournament is notorious for several things. The most obvious one is the huge gathering of Arkansas fans that find their way to Dallas to support their Razorbacks. A related phenomenon is the amazing dearth of support for any other school except, on occasions, Texas Tech.

A third yearly occurrence, less fa-

Hal Hammons

Assistant News Editor

mous but no less annoying, is what I have termed "The Battle of the Bands." During every game of the tournament the fans are sure to be treated to a decidedly unharmonious din resulting from two bands trying to play at the same time.

The band of Team A is supposed to play during one time-out, and then Team B gets its turn during the next one. Before the game the bands alternate songs, and afterward each plays its closing fanfare.

The main purpose behind it all is to give each one the opportunity of equally supporting its team without — and pay attention here, this is the important part — without making it more annoying than humanly possible.

As I said, this method is fine in theory, but when it comes down to actuality it obviously becomes more trouble than

it's worth. The result is surprisingly consistent: One band starts playing, the other apparently considers the audience deserving of better music and starts in as well, each tries to drown the other out, nobody gets entertained, and everybody gets hacked at the other guys.

It's stupid. It's rude. And worst of all, it appears to be permanent.

If you weren't there that weekend you may find this hard to believe, but the only band with any class was Arkansas'.

The Aggie Band did OK for a while, but after the semifinal game against the Razorbacks they lost it.

As if to get in one last shot before taking off to Padre, Col. Haney started the band in one last rendition of "The War Hymn." Never mind that the Arkansas band was still playing, and that it was the band that about 13,000 of the 16,000 people there wanted to hear.

No, the Aggies had to give all them Hawgs a going-away present.

And it got worse. The conference had

arranged for some entertainment before the next game — a group of men calling themselves The Blues Brothers who did a remarkably good choreography routine to music from the movie of the same name. The Blues Brothers took the floor on their cue after the Hog Wild Band finished their song, ready to do their stuff.

The Aggie Band, however, wasn't finished.

Like it or not, it must be admitted that "The War Hymn" in its entirety is a very long song. And the band played every note of it.

Two tournament officials were yelling at Col. Haney for the entire second half of the song, trying to get him to cut the band off. You could almost read the colonel's lips as he kept directing, "Just a minute. Just a minute." And when they finally finished, he turned to the official screaming in his ear and seemed to answer back, "There. Satisfied?"

No, Colonel, she wasn't. And neither was anybody else. It was a shameful display of selfish disregard for others.

And it's Aggies, of course, who can not understand why the rest of the state and conference hates Texas A&M so much. Who can figure it?

At least Aggies usually can pass their noxiousness off as "tradition." But it's not traditional to play "The War Hymn" after basketball games. It's not even traditional to finish the song once it has started. I have heard the song interrupted numerous times. There is even an obvious stopping point, right in the middle after varsity's horns have been sawed off.

But for some reason it was extremely important to play the entire song, including the part that hardly anyone knows the words to about their being "hot time in Austin tonight."

I'll tell you, I was appalled. I've never been a spectator at an Aggie game where I didn't sing the words to "The War Hymn." But I didn't participate that time.

I just wasn't in the mood.

Hal Hammons is an assistant news editor for The Battalion.

When roommates break up, their fish suffer

The call from my roommate came on a cold, dark, January night. "Timm, this isn't easy for me to say, but I'm leaving you."

I was shocked and stunned. "You're kidding," I said. "I can't believe this. How can you do this to me?"

"I feel it's the right thing to do. I just can't stand our living arrangement anymore," he said.

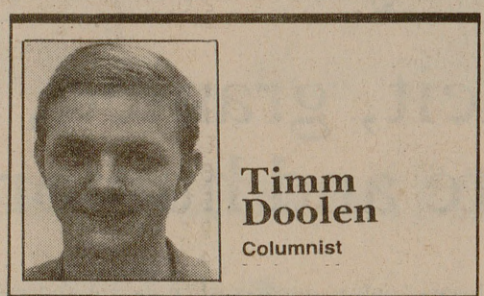
I was almost speechless, until a realization hit me. "But what about..."

"The fish? I'm suing for full custody," he said. There was spite in his voice.

It came as quite a surprise. After all our months together, my roommate was filing for an alternate living situation.

"I don't feel like we're truly in cohabitation anymore, like when we were newly-roommates. I've already gathered my things from the dorm room. I need my freedom, my space. That's why I'm moving into an apartment. I guess I'll see you in court. Bye."

Russell and I had both been through



Timm Doolen
Columnist

the procedure before. Russ had a roommate before me and he was my third roommate. But it was different this time, because we had mutually decided to have fish, and they would suffer the most from our separation.

Ingo and Keith, the swordtails, were several months old, so they could handle the trauma. But Jason and Ron, the twins, the poor little guppies, were only weeks old. Their future could be forever damaged.

Looking back on the situation, I see how it all fits into place. I had always wondered where Russell was going when he'd slip away for hours on various afternoons. I later found out he'd been apartment hunting behind my

back. I'd heard nasty rumors that he was searching for another roommate, and now I knew they were true.

The trial began in late February. Russell had won temporary custody of the fish, and every day he'd dress them up in a fancy bowl with fresh water and bring them into court. I'd peer at the bright blue bowl and I'll swear I could see little frowns on their four faces.

During the court proceedings, the ugly details came out about how Russell had slept (just slept) in dozens of houses, apartments, and dorm rooms (excuse me, residence hall rooms) all over campus. He slept around more than a cheap sorority girl.

Sometimes he'd get wasted at parties just so he could "spend the night" there. By the finish of his escapades, Russ had seen the interior of almost every apartment complex in the Bryan-College Station area.

A few weeks into the court battle, I noticed that Russell quit bringing Jason to court. After a few days of Jason's absence, I confronted Russell outside the courtroom. He told me that Jason was

very sick, and that it was best for him to stay home. I demanded to see him and, reluctantly, Russell let me go out to his new apartment and see my baby fish.

Jason was floating on his back at the top of the tank. I tried to feed him, but he just continued floating. His eyes were closed so I nudged him, trying to wake him up. His body was cold. He was dead. I don't know whether it was the constant exposure to his guardian's impurities, or underfeeding, but he had swum his last mile.

I was outraged at Russell for letting it happen, but I knew I could do nothing to bring Jason back. I could only hope for the continued good health of Ingo, Keith, and Ron.

After Jason's death, a cloud hung over the rest of the trial. Though the trial only lasted another month, it seemed to drag on for at least a month and a half.

The judge ruled in Russell's favor. He was awarded half of everything we mutually owned, which consisted of some laundry detergent and some grocery items, which had gone bad by then. But most importantly, he won custody of the fish.

In his decision, the judge cited the fact that Russell had bought the fish (he had receipts to prove it) and technically owned them, so I had no legal right to keep them. But can one ever really own another living being? And can my love for those fish be described in legal terms?

I was devastated by the decision. The judge was going to leave those three young fish, that needed their tanks changed regularly, with a man who couldn't be trusted to clean the sink, disregarded my own feelings and worried about their future. Would they have normal personalities growing up without two parents? Would they go into a respectable school?

All is not lost — I get to see the fish on alternate weekends and for two weeks of the summer, on the "army reserve" custody plan. When I pick them up, it's great to see their puckering faces, but I know it'll never be the same for me, or them, again.

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

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.

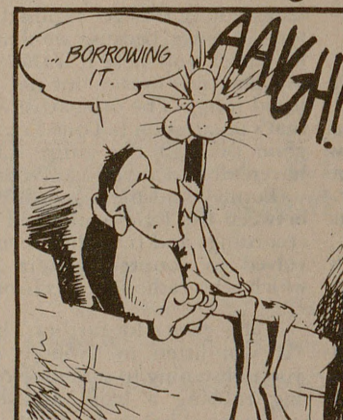
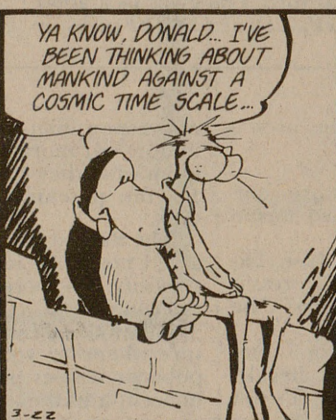
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