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Mail Call

Exxon must clean up oil spill

EDITOR:

The recent oil spill near Valdez, Alaska marks the worst ever on the North American continent. This news alone is frightening, but the events that have followed make me sick to my stomach.

In one of the Houston papers, the shipping president for Exxon was quoted as saying that cleanup has gotten off to a "slow start."

When 10 million gallons of crude oil are dumped into the ocean it can't simply be cleaned up even if you get off to a good start.

Exxon seems to be checking to see how much the cleanup efforts would cost them. I don't often ask for government intervention, but I believe it is mandatory in this case.

Exxon should be held in full responsibility and should be devoting much of its manpower to lessen the damage of such a spill. The crew of the ship was at fault in running aground. I feel the government in the future should give stiff penalties to the companies that cause such disastrous environmental blunders.

This might keep the crews a little more on their toes. The responsibility they have to the environment is a great one and should not be taken lightly.

There are times in the world today when money should run a distant second in priority.

Mike Allen '89

Don't hold your breath

EDITOR:

Three cheers for the editor and her column on the City Council's request that record stores not sell certain rap albums to minors! I'm not going to insult everyone's intelligence and preach about the evils of censorship, but there are two subjects I'd like to address.

First, Steve Tunnell, who do you think you are? I don't care if you think these minors are "impressionable" or not. They still have the right to listen to music without your "guidance."

I'm also really disappointed in Mayor Ringer and the College Station Censorship Committee (oh, I mean City Council). Let's examine this carefully. What happened to the Last Temptation of Christ when the Christians "outlawed" it? What happened a month ago when a bounty was put on the head of an author for the obscure book "Satanic Verses"?

Both the movie and the book made a lot more money and received a lot more attention because of the attempt to censor them.

I'm really disgusted with the disk jockey Steve Tunnell and our good politicians up the street. Please don't hold your breath for me to thank you for "saving" College Station's youth.

Greg Martinez '91

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.

New phone technology won't invade privacy

If someone raps on your door or rings your bell, the sensible response is to ask: "Who's there?"

There's nothing impolite about the question. You have a right to know who is standing outside your door, and why, before you open it.

Or if you have a peephole, you can look out. If a Girl Scout is standing

Mike Royko
Columnist

there with boxes of cookies, you can safely slide the bolt. On the other hand, if you see a man with a ski mask over his face, it would be wise to grab the phone and call the cops.

There may be peaceful nooks and crannies in this country where a person can open a door and be sure that the caller is friendly. But in most big cities, and many of the small ones, it's a good idea to find out whether the knock or ring has come from the big bad wolf.

There is nothing more precious than your fundamental right to privacy and security. When you are in your home,

nobody can enter without your consent. Even a cop has to have a search warrant to cross the threshold. If you wish, you can simply ignore a knock. You're under no obligation to talk to someone simply because they knock on your door.

But then we have that most wondrous and devilish device — the telephone.

Every day, millions of Americans get phone calls they don't want or need.

They hear from pitchmen who want to sell them siding or fences, stock market peddlers who offer to make them rich, hustlers of every conceivable product.

The millions of unwanted calls also include the old standby — the panter, heavy breather and obscene talker.

There is little you can do to defend yourself against the nuisance or harassing call. You can get an unlisted number, but there's an extra charge and many people don't want to be cut off from those who have a valid reason to call them. You can unplug your phone, but could you risk missing an important call.

For obvious reasons, my number is unlisted. But a guy once managed to find it and amused himself by making drunken, abusive phone calls late at night. After several nights of this, I changed numbers. I shed the jerk. But I had to spend hours phoning friends and relatives to give them the new number.

So I've always thought how nice it would be if there was some way of knowing who was on the other end of the phone when it rang.

And now, through modern technology, phone companies can provide you with a little screen that displays the number of the phone that is being used to call you.

It hasn't come into widespread use yet. But phone companies are planning to soon offer the device, known as "Caller I.D.," in several Eastern states and on the West Coast — if they can get by the legal hurdles being put up by various consumer advocates.

Through a strange twist of logic, the new service is being called an invasion of the privacy of those who make the phone calls.

They say your privacy will be violated because the person you call will know the number of the phone you are using. And in many cases, by knowing the number they can determine who you are and where you are calling from.

Therefore, their precious right to privacy — phoning you without you knowing who they are — will be violated.

Huh?

Well, that's what they say. And they are making a big fuss in states where the service will be offered.

Maybe my logic is cockeyed, but it seems to me that the person whose phone rings has a first option on privacy and freedom from jerks.

If a woman's phone rings, and a guy starts panting and sharing his lascivious hopes and dreams, it would be nice if the woman could jot down his phone number and give it to the police. Then the caller could discuss his need to party at strangers with a judge.

Sure, a phone creep can find a way around it by going to a public pay phone. But in zero weather, he's less likely to go trudging out with a pocket full of quarters.

There may be some cases in which there are valid reasons to not want your number revealed. Someone phoning a tip to the police about a neighbor peddling drugs might have good reason to remain unknown. A pay phone would provide that cloak.

The phone company in Pennsylvania argues that "Caller I.D." acts as sort of a peephole in the door, so you can see who is knocking.

The critics say that a caller has the right to put a finger over his peephole.

Well, if someone knocks on my door and puts a finger over the peephole, they will soon find a cop knocking on their back.

It's not the best solution to nuisance calls. I'd prefer that there be a button on my phone and when I push it, a piercing sound pops the eardrum of the caller.

But I doubt if something that useful will ever be on the market, although I can hope.

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Parking situation at A&M is not good, but it's improving

I have never been so angry or so close to crying over such a stupid, stupid thing.

Parking.

All I wanted was to park my stupid car in a stupid parking space and go to my stupid class. But no.

Some moron cut me off as I sat very politely waiting to get into my parking spot that I had waited 30 minutes to get. I was mad. I pulled around and waited a couple of minutes and someone else came out. I pulled up to get my new-found space when out of nowhere — like the devil sent this demon car to swoop down and cause me misery — another car cut me off and took my space.

At this point I was yelling at the goon (my windows were up, though).

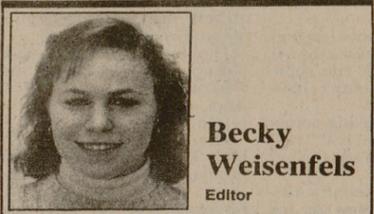
When you pull into the parking lot and see all those people moving their mouths and you think they're singing with the radio — you're wrong. They are yelling baaaaaad words at the top of their lungs as they watch the clock tick closer to class time.

I know almost everyone has complained at some time about how horrible the parking situation is on campus.

I am now among the ranks of those complainers.

I was lucky. In four years here, the little incident I just described was the first really bad experience I had with parking. I am usually more patient (for parking, at least).

To finish the story, I finally got a



Becky Weisenfels
Editor

parking space and I could see, as I got out of my car, one of the inconsiderate blobs who took my space.

So I took out after him.

Yes, I was so angry that I was willing to chase after some stranger to yell about a block of cement. Fortunately for him, I did not catch up with the blob. If I would have, I know I would have chickened out and asked the time or something, but it's the thought that counts.

By the time I finally got to class, I was calming down from the parking fiasco, but images kept flashing through my brain.

I remembered one of my old suite-mates who came in bawling one day because she had circled the parking lot for 45 minutes and couldn't take it anymore.

I remembered living in a dorm and being afraid to leave during certain parts of the week, especially before football games, because I knew I would never see another parking space for as long as I lived.

I sat there and tried to blame everyone in the Texas A&M University system for my problems finding a parking space.

I was ready to yell and scream at somebody — anybody — because I couldn't find a parking space. Then, and here's where it gets weird, I realized there is no one who really deserves to be yelled at (except the blob in the goon-mobile).

As long as I have been attending A&M, there have been people griping about the lack of parking spaces. Actually, the real gripe people have is not lack of parking spaces; it's lack of close parking spaces. There are vacant spaces out in the fish lot, but no one wants to park way out there and then ride the bus in to the main part of campus. They want to park right next to the buildings in which they have their classes.

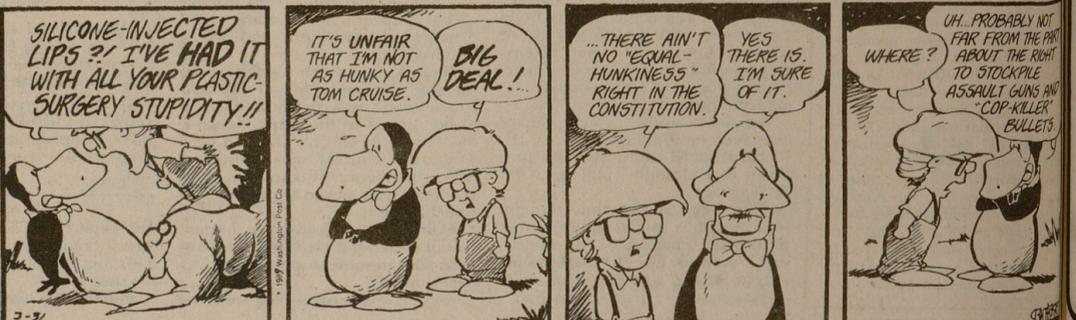
A&M has enough parking spaces, just not where students want them. So in the construction plans, despite a long wait, I have to give A&M credit because they are doing something about it.

The University decided to build parking garages. One was completed near Blocker, and two are planned near the Commons and the MSC.

The point is that we all gripe about parking, now more than ever. But let's give the University a break. They're taking care of it and, besides, there are bigger and better things we can gripe about in the future.

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

BLOOM COUNTY



by Berke Breathed

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