

Mail Call

Aggie apathy abounds

EDITOR:

We'd like to thank Igor Carron and the handful of others who cared enough to participate in the demonstration June 21, concerning the recent massacre in China.

According to the Aggie Code of Honor, Ags do not tolerate those who lie, cheat or steal. The Chinese communist government has done all three on a massive scale. It seems ironic that, at a school that has contributed so much to the defense of American liberties, so many people remain utterly apathetic toward the struggles of others who yearn to obtain similar freedoms. For us, Wednesday's demonstration was a statement in protest to this apathy and to the limp, anemic response of the Bush administration to this situation.

Here at Texas A&M, thousands flock to the burial of a school mascot, and the American flag is lowered to half-mast for the occasion. But few can spare the time to mourn the murder of thousands of courageous people who aspired to freedom. Maybe it is easier to guard the patch of grass around the Memorial Student Center. A few well-placed signs are all that is required for everyone to be satisfied that their ideals are being honored. We wonder how long our own freedom will be maintained when such complacent attitudes prevail.

Greg Pogue
Graduate student
Accompanied by two signatures

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Remember the good ol' days

I've always considered college a time in one's life when he or she is somewhere between responsibility and "Romper Room." I know this sounds ridiculous, but it seems like the average college student has a Dr. Jeckyl-Mr. Hyde personality (or maybe I should say Dr. Jeckyl-Henrietta Hippo personality). The average college student knows when to work and when to play. At least, most of the time we do.

But remember that old adage, "Time flies when you're having fun?"

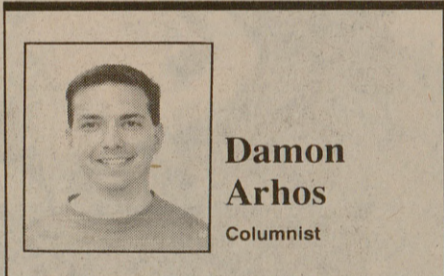
Well, at the ripe old age of 21, I am beginning to feel the byproducts of the aging process. No, I'm not taking Geritol or anything. A lot of things are just making me feel older.

I think it all started last weekend when I was flipping through the paper. All of a sudden this headline hit me: "Smithsonian honors 'Sesame Street' on its 20th anniversary." Among the exhibits are Oscar and Big Bird, as well as a re-creation of Mr. Hooper's storefront. You know you are old when they start putting muppets in a museum.

When I made the startling discovery that my childhood idols had become ancient artifacts, things only got worse. My five-year-old niece, an avid "Sesame Street" fan, was sitting next to me when I read about the exhibit. The article included a picture of Mr. Hooper happily talking to Big Bird, as he does on many of the programs. When I showed her the picture, she pointed at it and said, "Uncle Damon." (yes, UNCLE Damon) "Who is that?" I answered, "Well, that's Mr. Hooper."

And then she said it.

"Uncle Damon, who is Mr. Hooper?" And I said, "Go ask your mother."



Damon Arhos
Columnist

Last night when I went to see a movie with a friend of mine, I was reminded of my age again. After the preview for "Batman" was shown, I asked my friend, "Where's Robin?" She replied, "Oh, they killed him off in the comic strip a while ago." I was absolutely dumbfounded. No more Robin? How could they? It's like taking eggs from bacon or Amos from Andy.

Remember the good ol' days when Adam West played Batman? Or when the theme to "Batman" was sung by random people instead of Prince? And it actually SOUNDED like the "Batman" theme song?

Speaking of movies, can you remember the first "Star Wars" movie? "Raiders of the Lost Ark?" Believe it or not, these movies came out before PG-13. You know you are getting old when you can remember the original movie that spawned five sequels. You also know you're getting old when you can remember when you could actually buy candy with sugar instead of nutri-sweet and the butter on the popcorn wasn't cholesterol free.

Or how about "The Brady Bunch?" They were so groovy. No matter how old I get, it always seems like Marcia and Greg are older than me. And the same goes for "Leave it to Beaver." It really makes me feel old to see Wally's

wrinkles and gray hair on the all new adventures of the Cleavers. Producers need to quit making these "reunion shows" of all our old favorites so that our classical images of these characters remain intact.

The worst, the absolute worst, occurs when small children call you "mister" or "sir." Those two words make me shudder. Probably one of the most traumatic experiences of my life was being introduced as "Mr. Arhos" to my niece's kindergarten class. I always try to remember another old adage: "You are only as old as you feel."

So, as I enter my final year of college, I will have to deal with the wrinkles forming on my forehead and other signs of the aging process that we will all eventually go through. I just keep looking at the brighter side of things. I still have my teeth, my hairline isn't receding and there are only about 40 years or so until I can retire.

And to all those people who think that I am already washed up, over-the-hill and outdated, I only have one thing to say: I know you are, but what am I?

Damon Arhos is a junior journalism major and a columnist for The Battalion.

Reporters have right to opinion

Molly Ivins
Syndicated Columnist

As one who has never been shy about letting readers know what I think of various politicians, perhaps it ill behooves me to criticize someone else for excess. However, I'm afraid one of the brethren has gone too far. Roddy Stinson writes a column for the Express-News in San Antonio and Sunday a week ago he wrote about a homeboy, State Rep. Dan Morales, who is running for the Democratic nomination for attorney general. Stinson thinks Morales is "the best politician San Antonio has produced in the last 10 years," which for all I know is true: Morales is a pretty good guy, all right, Stinson goes to propose that everybody in South Texas should pitch in and help Morales get elected, something he's perfectly free to urge upon his readers — I like to see people get excited about and involved in politics and I like newspaper writers who aren't too cynical to believe in a good pol.

I reckon if I had a few more cups of coffee I could work up to that pitch of enthusiasm for Congressman John Bryant, a homeboy who is probably the best politician Dallas has produced in the last 10 years (Zan Holmes was earlier). Maybe it's just hometown prejudice, but to my mind, Bryant is even a shade or two better than Morales, who tends to demagogue about law 'n' order even though he's running for an office that has nothing to do with criminal justice (the attorney general, for the millionth time, is the state's civil lawyer). Likewise, if Lyn Ashby or somebody in Houston wanted to take up for John Odam, the former Harris County Democratic chairman who is also running for attorney general, well, danged if he's not a real good guy, too. It's one of those freak races where everybody in it is first rate.

Trouble with Brother Stinson's enthusiasm for Morales is that he goes on to say, "If you have friends or relatives in any county outside South Texas who would give Dan a handshake, a smile, a glass of iced tea, a big piece of pie or a small crowd as he travels through their area, send me their names, addresses and phone numbers and I will pass them along to the Morales camp." He promises to put up a big map on his office wall and put a pin in it for every name he gets, says it's a contest and thumps the tub quite a bit more. The reason that makes me wince is I'm afraid it's parlor close to a corporate contribution: In fact, that's what it is.

I hold the position, heretical in our business; that newspaper reporters, yea, even political reporters, are also citizens free to have opinions. I believe perfect objectivity is not only not possible, it's not even desirable.

Despite the trio of fine candidates in the race discussed above, the more common problem as we all know, is the race with no good candidates in it. Remember the story about how miners used cameras in the old days? They'd take the birds down into the mines with them and if there was a gas leak, the little birds would die first, warning the miners to get out.

Well, another miner's canary just

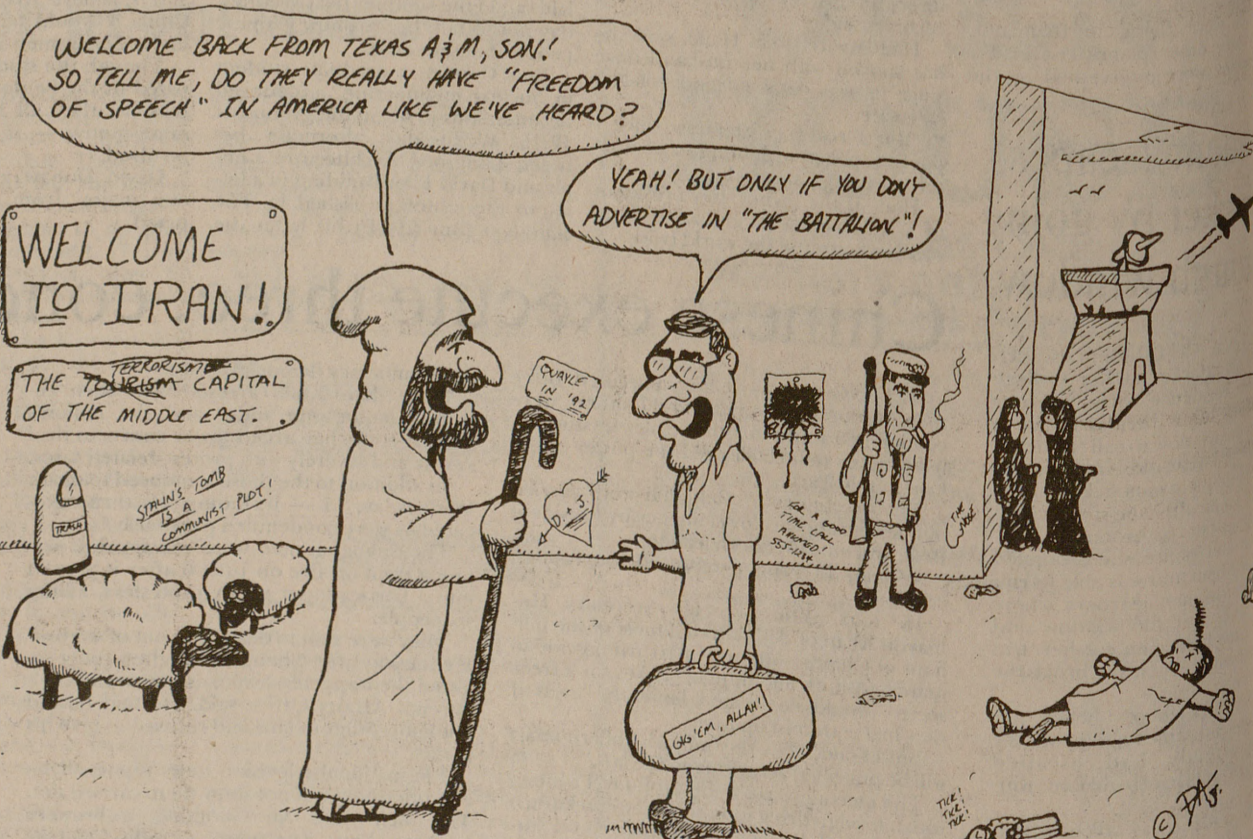
died over in South Florida. The congressional seat in Miami left vacant by the death of the beloved old radical Claude Pepper is the focus of an intense Republican campaign. Lee Atwater, the Republican smearmeister, said earlier in the week that the seat "belongs to a Cuban-American." State Sen. Jack Gordon planned to run for the Pepper seat, and it was generally believed he'd have trouble getting the Democratic nomination. However, he withdrew from the race late last week, repelled by the news the campaign had already sunk to

And Jack Gordon is no political virgin — he made a lot of money in private before he went into politics, but he's been a public official for 25 years. The Florida Legislature ain't beanbag, as Gordon said, "I've been in dirty campaigns. I've been in nasty campaigns. I've won them." But Gordon also said "I've spent a lot of time with media consultants, with pollsters, with image-makers, with strategists. By the time you've done talking to them, you are not in the campaign yourself, you're presenting the worst, negative kind of images that exist, in order to get the attention of people with 30-second commercials."

Gordon said of Atwater's tactics: "My statement would more inflame a race that has more tension and antagonism than it can possibly deal with right now. That is the most inflammatory, outrageous, irresponsible statement. The seat is not a black seat, not a Jewish seat. It belongs to the people in the district who are Americans. But Atwater is sending a signal. I don't want to get that kind of divisive campaign. I don't want to be responsible for it, and I don't want to have to deal with the consequences, which I think would be disastrous for this community. We do need somebody throwing matches over our tinderbox and that's what's happening."

"The loser of that campaign would be the people, not only of the district, but the people of the country who would once again see the political process based and reduced to the level of vicious distortion. It would not be what a Democratic society requires — a discussion of some alternative ways to achieve social progress." He quoted Goethe, who said "You should never wear your best suiters when you go out to fight for justice and truth." Gordon said he'd need one of the special suits they use in nuclear plants against radioactivity for this campaign. The polls showed Gordon about eight points ahead of his most prominent Republican opponent when he withdrew from the race.

Gordon quit not just because of Atwater and all the dirt and garbage that came, but because the campaign professionals on his own side told him there was only one way to fight back. No lot of people are saying it just means water won again and it will only entangle him — but we all know who's losing.



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