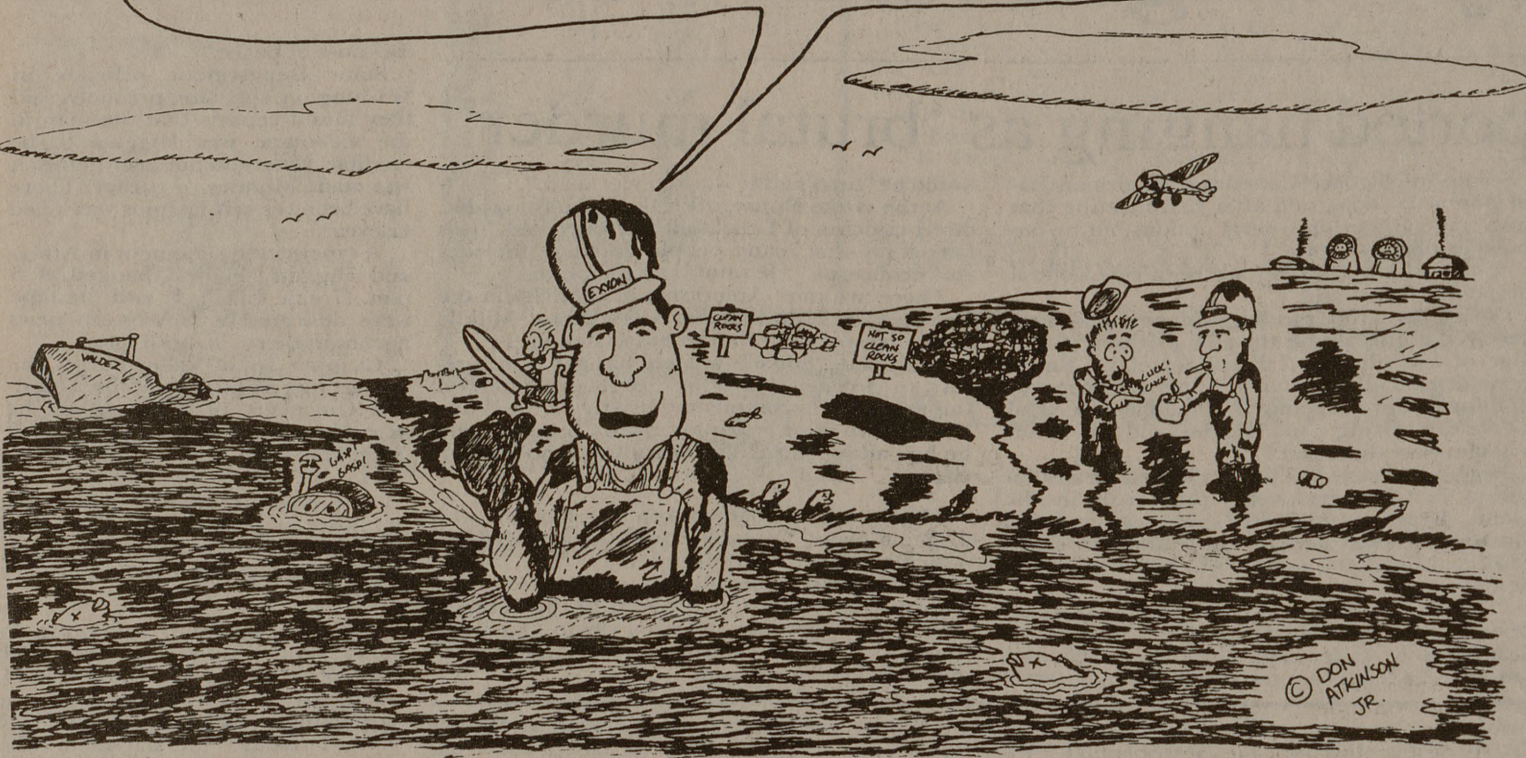


WELCOME TO ALASKA WHERE, THANKS TO EXXON, YOU CAN HARDLY TELL THERE WAS EVER AN OIL SPILL.



## Columnists live in shadows of past

Many times as I discuss working at *The Battalion* with friends and acquaintances, at some point in the conversation the person I'm talking to will say, "Well, Timm, you're a pretty good writer, but you're no Karl Pallymeyer."



Timm Doolen  
Assistant  
Opinion  
Page Editor

My first semester at A&M was the fall of 1987, just weeks after Karl wrote his last column for *The Battalion*, so I never had any first-hand experience reading Pallymeyer's work. And because he has not been at A&M for almost two years, many of the current Aggies have never read any of his work. Yet he remains a "legend" of sorts here at A&M.

Not knowing what his writing was like, I at first dismissed the few people who spoke of Pallymeyer. But as I heard more people speak of him more and more often, I began to wonder about this Pallymeyer man. I'd ask my critics what was so great about Karl Pallymeyer, and most would reply that he had a knack for stirring up controversy and making people mad.

Signs of that truth are everywhere. There's a T-shirt hanging on one of the back walls of the Batt-Cave that says "Beat The Hell Outta Karl Pallymeyer" in big letters. And last fall one of our columnists, Stephen Masters, wrote a column describing how, no matter how hard we try, none of the present columnists can get out from under Karl Pallymeyer's shadow, he was just too good and too controversial a writer.

So I pulled out Pallymeyer's clippings from the files in the *Battalion* office to experience first-hand my competition from the past.

Karl was an entertainment writer in addition to being an opinion page columnist, so I read a few of his entertainment reviews and feature stories. For the most part, his reviews portrayed a definite knowledge of the subject matter and his analyses were enjoyable, thorough and unbiased. I thought he really was a good writer, like everyone had been telling me.

Then I started reading his opinion page columns, the articles for which Karl Pallymeyer apparently had become famous. I read through several of them and couldn't believe it. They were mediocre at best. I thought that maybe I had read his worst ones, so I read some more, but they didn't get that much better.

His columns were not poorly written or incomprehensible, just mediocre. That's not necessarily bad for a columnist, but it boggles my mind that people hold this guy's writing in such high esteem.

Here's an example of one of his columns.

Q: What's this: Buzz buzz buzz... [a few dozen more buzzes]...buzz buzz?

A: The only thing you hear with the new phone registration system.

And that's the whole column! It is very unlikely that something like that would even get printed on the current opinion page. We're into more concrete

analyses of current problems than Pallymeyer's offering.

Other of his topics included eating fruit pies, his love for his cat, mowing his lawn, parachuting, Pee Wee Herman, not being able to get a song on his head... well, you get the picture. He also wrote about a dozen columns on entertainment subjects; they were good, but misplaced.

In all fairness, he did write several serious and interesting articles. The topics included drugs, AIDS, civil liberties, football, America as a declining economic power, accessibility of education to handicapped students, the Corps Cadets and several columns about religion and its many misuses.

Yet most of his views on the political topics of the day (Robert Bork, Stephen Bernard Goetz, etc.) were colored by shoot-from-the-hip liberalism. In other words, many of his articles appear to have been written on the basis of his dogmatic stand of well-planned logic.

The one column that everyone mentions when they think of Pallymeyer is the "Bowhead" article — the one in which he describes the new phenomenon (at the time) on campus, women who wear bows in their hair. I read it and found it to be a paper of sexist reotyping, though I realize his intentions were meant only in fun.

Overall, I found him to be a good writer, but I couldn't see how he came to be perceived as a veritable writing genius. Some of his more controversial articles made many people mad, but not because he presented his views in an interesting way that made people challenge their long-time beliefs. Instead, his columns made people mad in large part because they were offensive to those people. For example, he called members of Student Government "Young Urban Fascists" and Fish Concentration Camp.

I still can't understand why he is remembered to this day, two years after his last article. I just assume that a few of his articles sparked particular controversy, for whatever reasons, and that he had a reputation for writing controversial articles. So anything he wrote was probably immediately controversial, which built upon itself.

The current *Battalion* columnists live in a part of Pallymeyer's shadow. I hope our writing styles and our choices will provoke people's thinking for the right reasons and in the right manner. With some good writing and a few more graduations, hopefully Pallymeyer's shadow will forever fade.

Timm Doolen is a junior computer science major and assistant opinion page editor for *The Battalion*.

## Mail Call

### Some Catholics ignore birth control ban

EDITOR:

Matt McBurnett has apparently not seen the poll that says a huge majority of Americans who consider themselves Catholics has indeed ignored the papal "ban" on artificial birth control. In Italy itself, which is not usually considered Third World (unless you've looked for a restroom there), abortion is widespread as a form of birth control. Reproduction in "Catholic" third-world countries is not determined solely by a papal edict. In many of these countries, cultural tradition places high value on offspring as a sign of manhood. Local cultures have repeatedly proven more powerful than "universal" Catholicism. And despite high birth rates, infant mortality is high and a single death in

one real family (that has real emotions) should not be assumed to be less painful than a child's death in a second-world family. Many non-Catholic countries have the population problem.

The papal office has justifiably been a target for various accusations over the hundreds of years of its existence. But as McBurnett says, times have changed. The Pope is high profile even today, but nowadays he's high profile and low impact. Overpopulation is far more complex than McBurnett's solution would suggest.

M.L. Creamer

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.

## Religious congregations practice what they preach

Contributions to religion, which far exceed any other kind of philanthropy in America, rose to \$48.21 billion in 1988, up 8.24 percent. But the money doesn't go just for religion itself.

Other causes such as health, education and the poor come in for a big share of it, for which religion usually isn't credited but which it sees as part of serving God's world.

Nearly all the religious receipts came from individual donations. The increase in the total was almost double the year's inflation rate of 4.78 percent.

While these figures compiled by the American Association of Fund-Raising Counsel show a steady climb of religious giving in the country, they don't show an intriguing aspect of it.

This is that the religious recipients themselves give away nearly half of what's given to them, acting as a conduit to various other causes such as schools, community projects and caring for the needy.

The new figures show total American philanthropy last year passed the \$100-billion mark, reaching \$104.37 billion, up 6.7 percent from the \$97.82 billion the year before.

That, for comparative purposes, is considerably more than the \$82.6 billion the federal government spent in 1988 for non-defense goods and services.

### George W. Cornell

AP Religion Writer

Aside from the sheer bulk of giving, however, the figures don't show that much of the more than 40 percent slice received by religion also is passed on to other causes.

Consequently, while the report shows \$9.78 billion going to education, \$9.5 billion going to health and hospitals and \$10.49 billion going to human services, that's not all that these and other social causes received.

They also are beneficiaries of religious giving, although this indirect funding often is disregarded in classifying charities.

The broader impact was brought out in an extensive study last year by the Independent Sector of Washington, D.C., and the Gallup Organization of Princeton, N. J., in cooperation with 100 religious organizations.

It found that 54 percent of what religion receives goes to maintain its own worship and educational institutions, but that the other 46 percent goes to social programs beyond the church sphere.

Based on the ratio determined by the study, religion in 1988 would have put

more than \$22 billion into various social improvement causes.

That's far more than \$11 billion combined given in 1988 by foundations (\$6.3 billion) and corporations (\$4.7 billion) for such public purposes.

On a national and international level, substantial religiously given funds also are channeled into overseas agriculture improvement and health projects and also to serving refugees and promoting peace and racial justice.

Brian O'Connell, president of the Independent Sector, a non-profit organization of corporate foundations and voluntary organizations, said the study findings showed religious congregations "practice what they preach."

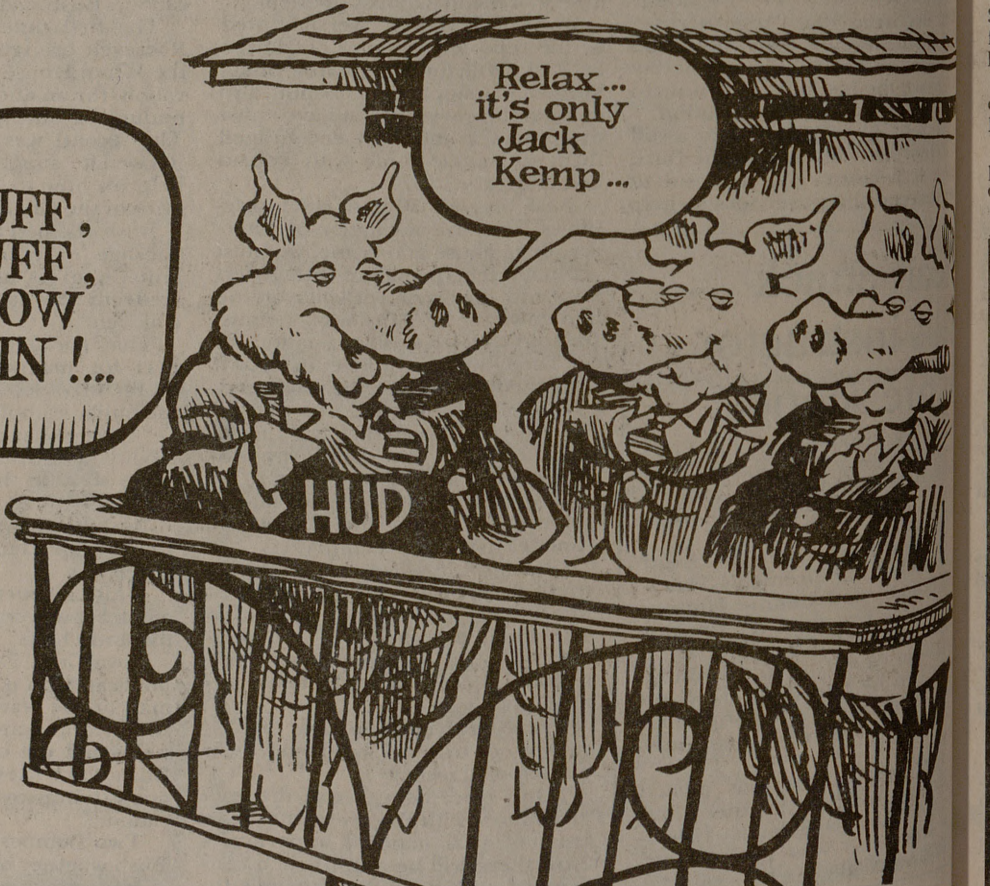
George W. Cornell is an AP Religion Writer.

MARGULIES  
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...AND I'LL HUFF,  
...AND I'LL PUFF,  
...AND I'LL BLOW  
YOUR HOUSE IN !..



Relax...  
it's only  
Jack  
Kemp...



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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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