

MARGULIES  
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## Mail Call

### Thank you, and you, so on Coming to America

EDITOR:

At the beginning of August, I was returning from Houston after picking up my jeep that was being serviced. I was in a hurry to get back for a class at noon, so I neglected to put gas in my quarter-full tank.

Needless to say, I ran out of gas. After knocking on two doors and getting no reply I found an old gas can. I was walking up the road with it when an Aggie stopped and offered me a ride to get some gas (even though I made no motion to flag him down). Thanks friend!

By this time it was 12:20 p.m., so I decided to try to make it to College Station without adding to the one gallon of gas in my tank. I made it to the intersection of Texas and New Main when I ran out of gas again. An Aggie hopped off of his bicycle and helped me push my dry vehicle through the spotlight. Thanks! A Corps buddy of mine stopped and offered me a ride to class after I secured the jeep in a parking space. Thanks Again!

I did not ask any of these people for help, yet they went out of their way for me. All I can say is "thanks," and I hope I can give back to A&M some of what it has given to me.

Pete Dill '89

EDITOR:

Since coming to America, I have learned a number of English words that I had never heard before through a dictionary or in a classroom. "Howdy," "rip off," and "what's up?" are a few. I began to learn English since my first day in this country when a professor asked me "what's up?" and I replied "the ceiling." However, the word "rip off" seems to be unique in its use.

Recently, a junkyard man ripped me off. The part I bought for my car turned out to be much worse than the one I already had in my car. They also refused to give me a refund or do any other fair compensation. In the process I lost about \$150.

When the junkyard man ripped me off, the English Language Institute (ELI) of our university came to my emotional rescue. I told myself that I was even more ripped off when ELI charged me \$555 for two useless courses (from the junkyard I at least got a bad part). Putting it in my Buddhist perspective, I am not the only person ripped off! This is not the first time I was ripped off!! So why worry?

Mahinda Karunaratne  
Graduate Student

*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.*

## We can do better than 'non-reg'

We communicate through our language, and the words we use impact greatly upon how we convey our ideas and how we view our world.

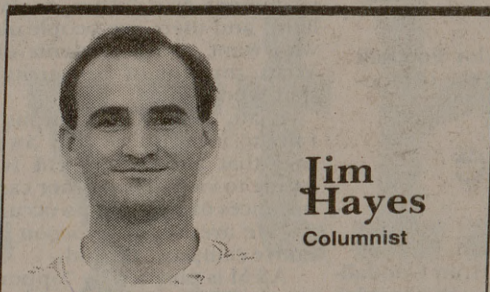
As a freshman I learned that the term "non-reg" refers to "any civilian undergraduate student" who attends Texas A&M. Literally, it means "non-regulation" and refers to students who attend A&M without following Corps of Cadets regulations. The word came into use during a time when the vast majority of A&M students attended as cadets.

Obviously, since then times have changed and so has the campus. Although the term may still be actively used in the Corps' military vocabulary, I question whether we roughly 30,000 civilian undergraduate students wish to continue thinking of ourselves as "non-regs."

"Non-reg" qualifies as an "inverted description." Inverted descriptions identify what someone is *not*, rather than what someone is. A few examples may help to put these descriptions in perspective:

- A woman having bright blue eyes describes herself as "non-brown-eyed."
- An engineering student visits home and tells family and friends that he is majoring in "non-liberal arts."
- A competitive diver tells his classmates that he participates in "non-swimming."

The inverted descriptions above shine a self-deprecating light upon those who label themselves with them. I



Jim Hayes  
Columnist

think the term "non-reg" tends to have a similar connotation around campus.

Obviously, "non-reg" has served some useful purpose since, to this day, it remains in the A&M vocabulary.

Many differences distinguish the two distinct groups of students at this university. Cadets live and eat apart from everyone else, adhere to a distinct appearance code and follow a military training regimen.

Cadets also report to the Office of the Commandant regarding disciplinary matters instead of the Department of Student Affairs. And the freshman admissions policy now differs slightly regarding students who intend to join the Corps.

Removing the term "non-reg" completely would clearly leave a void; a replacement term would be needed.

To fill the void, I suggest "civilian student body." "Civilian student body" could refer to those students who attend Texas A&M and choose to live as civilians.

"Majority student body" also might work. Fronted by a staunch Ol' Sarge,

the Texas A&M image has remained very military to this day. "Majority student body" could help to bring that image closer to today's campus climate by demonstrating that a majority of A&M students hold no military affiliation.

When cadets first uttered "non-reg" years ago, they could not have foreseen the immense growth and rapid changes that have occurred at the university. A&M has grown from a virtually all-male and all-military college to a co-educational and mostly civilian university.

The campuswide use of "non-reg" implies that most students view themselves as negative counterparts to the Corps. Such an implication seems false to me, and I pose this question: Do we, this civilian majority, want to continue thinking of ourselves as "non-regs?"

Jim Hayes is a senior economics major and a columnist for The Battalion.

## Legislature of the rich and famous

Syndicated Columnist

Molly Ivins

The advanced reaches of rationalism have been on display heresince the *Austin American-Statesman* started writing about Texas lawmakers using political contributions to buy expensive homes, cars, planes and other little accoutrements to help support them in the style to which they'd like to become accustomed. Turns out several of our solons failed to grasp the notion that one runs for public office in order to serve the people — they thought they were being elected to "Lifestyles of the Rich and Famous." They're too dumb to tell the difference between the Texas Legislature and "Falcon Crest."

I particularly enjoyed the clarity of Sen. Chet Brooks of Pasadena as he explained how he has been laundering money from his political contributions through a one-man political advertising agency consisting of himself. In 1988, Brooks funneled \$30,000 in campaign funds into the Brooks Agency, which operates out of his house and out of one of the three rooms in his legislative office in Pasadena. His legislative staff answers the phone.

Last year, Chet Brooks the politician leased two cars and some office equipment from Chet Brooks the ad agency for \$13,000. Although he had no opponent, he spent \$16,000 to hire himself to direct fund-raising and voter registration drives. In his other civilian life, Chet Brooks the ad agency is a real-estate appraiser.

Now, follow this explanation closely: Asked if he wasn't using campaign funds to bolster his personal finances, Sen. Brooks said, "If it was a big, complex company with a large office and staff, that might be a legitimate and valid question. In my case, for all practical purposes, it's a one-man operation. There's no big overhead."

So what about the \$16 K he paid himself to run a campaign when he had no opponent? "The work I did in 1988 was for the Democratic presidential ticket. The Brooks Agency was not hired by the campaign. It was just my way of helping the party and the candidate."

Ah, now we understand.

Plus, note this: "I pay income tax on everything that goes through the Brooks Agency." And besides, thinking of the sacrifices he has to make: "During the legislative session, the Brooks Agency is shut down for all practical purposes."

On the other hand, the ineffable Rep. Stan Schlueter of Killeen, chairman of the powerful House Calendars Committee, took, as he often does, the attack. He's a great believer in the theory of press relations that the best defense is a good offense. "The groundswell of 20 people trying to equate campaign contributions with members-for-sale is a bunch of bull," he quoted. Schlueter uses \$9,000 a month in campaign contributions to help pay the costs of his private airplane, to rent a three-bedroom house in North Austin, to pay for memberships at private clubs, to lease a car, pay his utilities, have his plants taken care of and so forth. The item that concerns me most is \$3,200 in food

and entertainment. I can under the \$2,341 for gifts and dinner committee members — I mean, chairman, he's gotta treat 'em a nice dinner, right? But it works that poor Schlueter had to spend feeding and entertaining himself during the session — because lobbied spending millions and millions of dollars this year entertaining lobbyists — it came to a staggering \$100,000. Hundreds of lobbyists paid take out all the other legislators poor Schlueter, despite being chairman of the most important committee in the House, kept having to pay for his dinner. It's sad, isn't it? The guy needs to work on his personality.

The bottom line is that in 1988, 47 committee chairmen in the Legislature got \$4.7 million in campaign contributions: Lobbyists and PACs tributed 63 percent of it. Under law, a legislator can treat campaign funds as an "officeholder account" use them to pay for any expenses associated with holding office. Very few of these people have opponents. Schlueter hasn't had one since he ran 13 years ago. So when a lobbyist gives one of these folks a \$5,000 "campaign contribution," what do you think he expects it to be used for?

Is this practice necessary, since we pay our legislators so notoriously well? Is this some thing everyone has to do in order to afford to be in the Legislature?

Well, no one ever claimed Representative Gossbrenner of Alice was a typical Texas legislator — she's terrific. Ernie Gossbrenner chairs an important committee — public education. She used to be a teacher, but she got elected she became a full-time legislator. She lives on the \$7,200 a month the people pay her. She doesn't live around in a private plane; she doesn't even lease a car from an ad agency consisting of herself — she drives a green bomb that only a low-rider could love. She represents a lot of poor people down in the valley — and she's poorer than most of them. It's never stopped her from doing an excellent job. For the sake of the Ernie Gossbrenners of the Legislature, I continue to support a raise for this sorry collection of lawmakers. The Ernie Gossbrenners will continue to be the exception unless we pay the people a decent salary.

As for the rest of them, merrily peddling campaign contributions for their personal use and "disguising" it in subtle ways — in a sane and decent way they'd be under indictment. People always whine and say, "I know it's terrible but there's nothing I can do about it. The hell you can't — you're the only one who can do anything about it. You get vote on the pay raise, and you get choose between the whores and the heroes — all you have to do is pay enough attention to know the difference."



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(USPS 045 360)

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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.

The Battalion is published Monday through Friday during Texas A&M regular semesters, except for holiday and examination periods.

Mail subscriptions are \$17.44 per semester, \$34.62 per school year and \$36.44 per full year. Advertising rates furnished on request.

Our address: The Battalion, 230 Reed McDonald, Texas A&M University, College Station, TX 77843-1111. Second class postage paid at College Station, TX 77843.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to The Battalion, 216 Reed McDonald, Texas A&M University, College Station TX 77843-4111.