

Move the hell outta bonfire!

It's time to move bonfire. That statement sends many people's blood pressure through the roof, as it once did mine. But, after taking a rational look at reasons for, and arguments against modifying this hallowed tradition, I have come to believe moving it is the right thing to do.

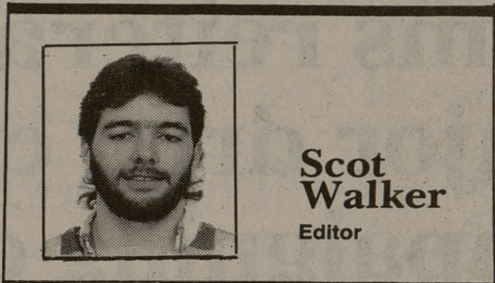
Bonfire, in its present location, is a major disaster waiting to happen. If one of the homes across Jersey were to catch fire, the College Station Fire Department would be seriously hampered in its attempts to fight the fire because of the huge number of people and vehicles in the area.

I've been told, and it might be true, that the probability of one of the homes actually catching fire is relatively slim. It's also quite likely that any place you choose to put a 55-foot pile of timber covered in jet fuel is going to constitute a fire hazard. If that probability exists at all, every possible means should be taken to minimize it.

Our University owns hundreds of acres of undeveloped land across the tracks. Very few homes are in the vicinity. Why not move bonfire over there? Even if the University decides to develop the area, there is enough room to safely have both.

But how are students supposed to get all the way over there to work on stack? Duncan Field is convenient for every one living on campus.

Wait a minute. I'm not talking about moving bonfire to Snook or Dime Box, just across the tracks. Thousand of students have classes across the tracks every day. There are even (GASP!!) parking lots over there. Interior shuttle buses run back and forth; it is even conceivable that it could be arranged for



Scot Walker
Editor

one of those buses to stop at the bonfire site.

It is also worth mentioning that while cut is never near campus, enough people make it out to "B.F.E." to kill enough trees to build bonfire, year after year. Transportation problems can always be overcome.

The location of bonfire is obviously of great concern to the leaders and citizens of College Station. At the Board of Regents recent "open forum," College Station city councilman Dick Birdwell urged the Regents to move bonfire. He cited the fire hazard and the difficulty of getting emergency vehicles in and around the area, and suggested the site be changed to the Polo Field.

I agree with his basic premise, but I don't think the Polo Field is a viable solution. The fire hazard simply would be shifted from the homes lining Jersey Street to the businesses near the intersection of Texas Avenue and University Drive. The traffic congestion would probably be just as bad as it is now.

The powers-that-be have already agreed that a fire hazard exists, as evidenced by the decision to limit the height of the structure. It is possible that the limit could be removed or raised if bonfire were held across the tracks.

But it's tradition to have bonfire on

Duncan Field. That's the way it's always been, and we shouldn't mess with tradition.

I don't think tradition is ever a sufficient basis for making a decision. Tradition says that if bonfire falls before midnight, it bodes ill for our chances of beating the University of Texas. Since I've been here, the bonfire has never made it anywhere near midnight, yet we haven't lost in five years.

As a letter-writer astutely noted in Friday's Mail Call, it also used to be tradition that all Aggies be white, male and in the Corps. And, as recently as last year, it was even tradition for our football team to play UT on Thanksgiving Day. So much for tradition.

It might be hard to believe, but not so long ago bonfire was held on the Simpson Drill Field. When the proposal was made to move it, a lot of people got up in arms, saying it was a tradition that shouldn't be changed. But it was changed, bonfire was moved, and the tradition carries on. If a simple change of location is enough to kill a long-standing tradition, then that says something about how much esteem that tradition was held in to begin with.

To the best of my knowledge there currently is no attempt under way to move Bonfire '89, despite persistent rumors to the contrary. Dr. John Koldus, vice-president for student services and the man in charge as far as bonfire is concerned, told me the topic has not even been discussed by the administration this year.

It's past time for discussion. Let's be responsible citizens and rational thinkers and move it across the tracks now.

Scot Walker is a junior journalism major and editor of The Battalion.

Mail Call

Knowledge is like a seed

EDITOR:

I agree with Wade See that many people attend school "not to learn, not to think critically and not to become educated, but to land a really groovy job." I've heard people say that when they get a job they're going to buy a fancy car and a beautiful house. Everybody has their own ideals for life. Some people think money is the basis of life, while others think education is the basis.

For the people who say that in the working environment you don't use what you've learned in school, well, what you use depends on your field of study and expertise.

Knowledge is like a seed. School is the earth in which the seed is planted. Given the appropriate initial conditions (schools, teachers, parents, etc.), the seed will sprout. As time progresses, it will grow into a fine and sturdy tree with many branches and leaves and a strong root.

A person who studies and understands is a person who has a desire for knowledge.

Michael Tran '90

Letters to the editor should not exceed 300 words in length. The editorial staff reserves the right to edit letters for length, but will make every effort to maintain the author's intent. Each letter must be signed and must include classification, address and telephone number of the writer.

Why don't we get drunk and listen to country music

According to a wire story I read the other day, a University of Minnesota researcher has told the American Anthropological Association that, after a 10-year study, he has determined that country music will make you drink faster.



Lewis Grizzard
Columnist

What was your first clue, Dick Tracy? The researcher, James Schaefer, told the anthropologists that he and a group of associates studied a bar in Missoula, Mont., and supported it by investigating 65 similar bars in the Minneapolis area.

"No doubt about it," said Mr. Schaefer, "country and western music can be a prescription for trouble among people with little self control."

Want another flash? Mr. Schaefer said that country lyrics — sad songs about love lost, hard times and drinking — were the main cause of the listeners' faster consumption of alcohol, and he even specified which country singers are most likely to push a listener into ordering another round.

He mentioned Hank Williams, Jimmy Rodgers, Jerry Lee Lewis, Johnny Cash, Merle Haggard, Jerry Jeff Walker, Willie Nelson and Waylon Jennings.

It took 10 years to come to those conclusions? Where did this guy hang out before he decided to study country music bars, the Christian Science Reading Room?

What did he expect to find while studying patrons of a country music bar in Missoula? That when somebody played Willie Nelson singing "Yesterday's Wine," they were going to switch to iced tea? Did he expect some cowboy who just rode in on a broken heart and punched up Hank Williams and Hank Jr. doing "I've Got Tears in My Beers for Cryin' Over You" to sit at the bar un-

til closing time nursing a bottle of Seven-Up?

Country music titles alone should have tipped off the researchers and saved them a lot of time developing their conclusions.

A lab rat could figure out Jerry Lewis's "What Made Milwaukee Famous Has Made a Fool Out of Me" is a drinking song.

And what about Willie's "Whiskey River," and "I Gotta Get Drunk, But I Don't Do Hate It?" And there's even a country song titled, "I'm Gonna Hire a Wino to Decorate Our Home," and another called "Pop-a-Top Again," and "Set Up Joe and Play 'Walkin' the Floor" and George Jones's haunting, "Drinkin' Don't Kill Me, Her Man Will."

And I almost forgot Merle Haggard's "Think, I'll Just Sit Here and Drink," though he doesn't say "drink." He says "drank," which is how people in Missoula probably pronounce it, too.

The problem with too many people in the research field is they research things that are too obvious. Tell me something I don't know — like does listening to loud rock music lead to larger pimples on teenagers' faces, or why rap music doesn't appeal to white Presbyterians.

Meanwhile, gimme another beer, rah, and play anything by George Jones.

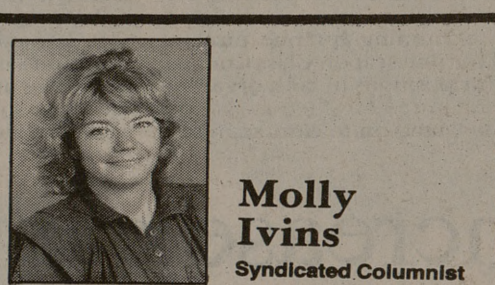
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Funding foreign political candidates is dangerous

Say, here's a bad idea. The Bush administration wants to give \$3 million of our money to help the presidential campaign of a right-wing candidate in a foreign country. Who the hell ever paid taxes with the understanding that the money would go to some foreign political campaign?

Look, I'm not completely naive, I know perfectly well this country funnels money to foreign politicians. We have a long and regrettable history of seizing on some despicable despot and proclaiming him the latest champion of democracy, unexcelled since Winston Churchill was in his prime — we did it with Ngo Dinh Diem, Syngman Rhee, Anastasio Somoza, Ferdinand Marcos, Augusto Pinochet and many others. But we have heretofore funneled such illegal support through illegal means — the CIA usually invents some back-channel conduit so we can all claim to be shocked and horrified when it is eventually revealed that the CIA, preferably while under the direction of someone safely dead, has once more slipped out of control.

But now Secretary of State Jim Baker wants to do the deed in front of God and everybody, as though it were something we had some right to be doing. One hangover from the Reagan era is the National Endowment for Democracy, which is supposed to run around promoting democracy all over the globe, but is always in danger of being perceived as an insufferable busybody. As long as the endowment limits itself to helping with voter registration drives and poll-watching to make sure elections are honest, it can be argued that it has a legitimate role. But now the Bush people want to use it to send money to



Molly Ivins
Syndicated Columnist

Violeta Barrios de Chamorro, the contra candidate in the Nicaraguan elections. Chamorro, one of that remarkable family whose members are on all sides of Nicaraguan politics, is the publisher of *La Prensa*, the opposition newspaper in Nicaragua, which has itself been receiving CIA funds for years now.

In the first place, this is a bad idea because it is wrong. If you have any doubts about how wrong it is, just use that simple old Golden Rule test — how would you feel if you found out the government of Nicaragua was spending millions of dollars to influence the American presidential elections? In the second place, whatever good the National Endowment for Democracy might be able to do will be hopelessly undermined if it becomes as partisan organization, supporting candidates of a particular ideological persuasion, instead of the democratic process itself. Seems to me almost any fool should be able to see that.

On another front (eternal vigilance is the price of liberty), Congress is now wrestling with the Helms amendment to censor the National Endowment for the Arts. Last time I wrote about this, I got a letter from some guy who said, "YOU may be in favor of subsidizing pornography with tax money, but I'M not."

Great, another one of those intelligent debates where one side says, "If you don't agree with me, you must be in favor of molesting small children."

Since I am a known feminist, you may take my views on pornography for granted. OK? Now, let's discuss the problem. The problem is that among the thousands of grants the National Endowment makes every year, last year two of them went to two arts organizations that did something controversial. One group sponsored a show (just one of many art exhibitions it sponsored during the course of the year) that featured some artist's representation of a crucifix in a glass of urine. Don't ask me; I don't get it either. The other arts group did an exhibition of the photos of Robert Mapplethorpe, a brilliant photographer, who happened to be gay. So naturally some people claimed the photos that were of nekkid men were glorifying homosexuality or some such thing. Big deal. Ironically, some of Mapplethorpe's photos of "nekkid" women, rather than men, are in the current issue of *Esquire* — so you can check it out for yourself and see if you think he's glorifying heterosexuality.

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