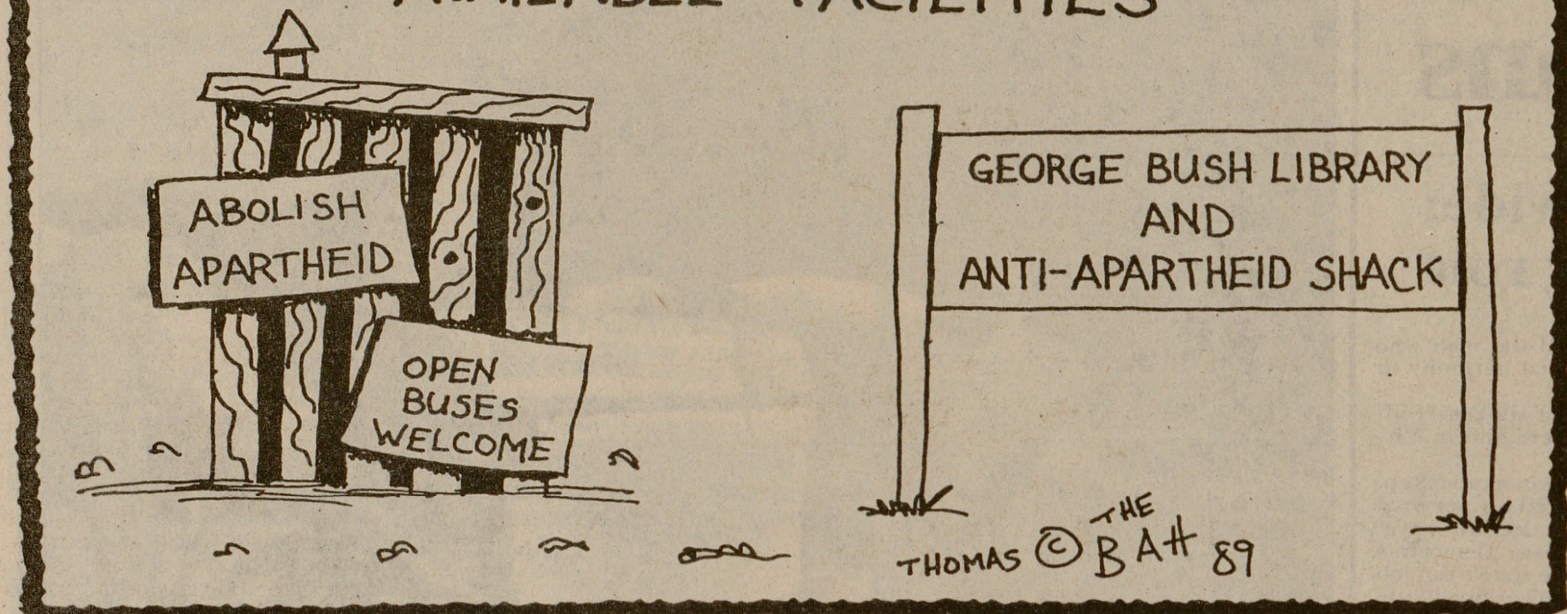


A+M FUNDING FOR LIBRARIES DICTATES AVAILABLE FACILITIES



Mail Call

Misdirected ideas

EDITOR:

The people going by the name "Aggies Against Bonfire" may be very well intentioned, but unfortunately some of their ideas are misdirected. First and foremost the idea of using the wood to heat the homes of the poor is a dangerous fallacy! The idea of giving wood to people for heating comes from minds that are idealistic and not yet grounded in fact. Never in Texas very few homes have fireplaces. Lower income housing almost never has wood burning facilities those that do are usually poorly constructed. Many a person (including firefighters) have lost their lives to this kind of use.

As to the waste of effort... This may be true for some people, but for quite a few of us learned a lot by working extremely hard, suffering and then relying on others, the effort was very worthwhile. That this is not true, I will readily admit. Could the effort be better directed? I don't know. As soon as someone provides with an alternative that will get that many people to work together with that effort I will yield the argument.

That it wastes trees is questionable. The four years that I worked bonfire, never cut a tree that wasn't already scheduled to be destroyed. When we cut the TMPA, the trees were to be bulldozed for future mining activity. In fact we run out of some cutting areas by D-10 bulldozers knocking down trees. If anything, we helped keep the cost of energy production low (minuscule) by aiding the poor. We also cut on land that was to be cleared for farming and ranching. We saved the owner a lot of time and money.

I admit there are many negative aspects, but the positive aspects that some people gain from bonfire are worth it. Please don't write me off as some uneducated industrialist, my job involves working with the poor, protecting people's lives, protecting the environment. I don't just espouse it, I do it every day!

David Jefferson '79

Bonfire makes A&M special

EDITOR:

I was shocked when I read about the new group "Aggies Against Bonfire" the Nov. 2 Battalion. It seems they advocate stopping bonfire because it is so and dangerous.

First of all, "Aggies Against Bonfire" appears to be a contradiction in terms. Bonfire is a tradition. If we take these things away, we might as well be attending Tech school. That's just overdoing it a bit!

This group apparently wants to advance the University, but I don't see how assimilating our school to all the rest is *advancing* it.

Texas A&M has certain traditions that set it apart from any other institution in the world. If we take these things away, we might as well be attending Tech school. Accordingly, maybe getting rid of bonfire should be accompanied by the cessation of Silver Taps (what a waste of ammunition) and the removal of our mascot (money spent on dog food could serve a much better purpose).

Ask any Ag who has been to cut or stack how wonderful and shameful bonfire is. Did they work hard all day for nothing? No.

Texas Aggie bonfire is students working together for a common goal that is damn worthwhile. Bonfire is meeting people and making friends. It is a promotion of this school and the tradition it stands for. When that stack of logs lit, it wrenches an emotion out of tens of thousands of people that is matched by nothing else; bonfire is the ultimate exhibition of school spirit.

Using bonfire's wood and labor for other purposes is a valiant proposition given by a few students who probably have valid concerns and convictions, but shouldn't come about at the demise of bonfire. Rather, I say help the community independently, and try to have a little pride in your school, too.

Chuck Sangerhausen '92

Thanks to a real Aggie

EDITOR:

For some odd reason, a person can never find a cop when he needs one. I really needed one, and they proved to me they really have no purpose except to give out parking tickets.

I was running late that morning, and I locked my keys in my car. At 10:15 I was searching for them and realized where they were. I flagged down a van and had four, yep four, cops inside it. I asked one of them to help me unlock the car and he rudely told me he could not help me, and if I wanted to be "brave" I should ask someone from the dorms to help me. Well, excuse me! My car was parked Old Main Drive and the only two dorms close enough were Law and Purdy. Walked over to the dorms and a student who is a resident of Law Hall went to the hanger. First I did he get the hanger, but he unlocked it and got my keys for me! Not only did he get the hanger, and next say it's not know there are still people who are willing to go out of their way to help others. That's what you call an Aggie. And if that's what an Aggie is, obviously we're not Aggies, especially since they wouldn't go out of their way to help someone in need.

M. Hernandez
Department of Modern Language

Letters to the editor should not exceed 300 words in length. The editorial staff reserves the right to edit letters and 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.

Report on DHS no revelation

The headlines said "Auditors Find DHS Offices Badly Managed," and the story gave us a litany of atrocious practices at the Department of Human Services — a bureaucracy top-heavy with overpaid, underworked supervisors, duplication of services everywhere, 15 layers of management in the central office, inadequate standards for programs and employees, lack of goals in critical social programs — all in all your basic motherlode of horror stories from the bowels of bureaucracy.

For all I know, the management consulting firm Touche, Ross Inc., international accountants, is right about all of this — we can only hope so, since they're charging us \$450,000 for the bad news. But may I suggest that some skepticism is called for. Not necessarily in this particular case — Touche Ross is an OK outfit and it's common knowledge in Austin that the Department of Human Services needs to clean up its act. But as a general rule, when some management consulting outfit charges a half million to tell us the obvious, to wit, that a government agency is rather badly run, it is not necessary to react as though Moses has just come down from a mountain with his some really heavy stuff written on that. I point this out because there are folks who push management studies as though they were an actual solution to what may be a part of the human condition.

In case you haven't noticed, almost all large institutions are rather badly run. Public, private — makes no difference. The common assumption that business is somehow more efficient than government doesn't bear close scrutiny. Is the savings and loan industry well run? Automobiles? Steel? Wall Street? (There's a hilarious new book called "Liars' Poker" by Michael Lewis about the inner workings of Solomon



Molly Ivins
Syndicated Columnist

Brothers.) (And speaking of business books, "Other People's Money" by Paul Pilzer and Robert Deitz of this newspaper, an account of the S&L follies, just got a fine review in The New York Times Book Review: This is a plug.)

One of the Republican gubernatorial candidates has been going around announcing rather menacingly that if he's elected, the state will, by God, get to know the meaning of the words "independent management audit." As though no one in government had thought to hire a consultant before now. I am unimpressed with the notion that what we need to do is apply sound business management to government functions. In business, the bottom line makes things relatively simple — lower costs, increase production, up go the profits. But how do you apply those principles to a government agency whose function is to work with people whose lives are often a tangled horror of overlapping problems in an effort to keep them from slipping onto the street, into prison or a mental hospital? Can you really measure the success of DHS by how quickly and accurately they process welfare and food stamp applications? If that's all we want from social workers, there's a lot of training going to waste.

The management audit notes that "quick completion of child abuse is increasing in the society as a whole, and is

aggravated by economic conditions. In case you hadn't noticed, the poor are getting poorer in America. If DHS is swamped, it's not the agency's fault.

I love management jargon. According to Touche Ross, "The department lacks clearly defined and commonly agreed upon goals and objectives. Without clear performance objectives, management lacks focus." How about "saving lives?" The variety of human misery at the lowest end of the economic scale in this state is staggering, and very seldom do really poor people have just one problem, like unemployment. You can usually add one or more from a list that includes health problems, mental health problems (especially depression), lack of education, divorce, an abusive family member, an alcoholic family member, no housing, no transportation, no child care and so on and so on. Somehow, I can't imagine that clearly defining performance objectives at DHS is going to help much.

One frequent problem with management studies is that they tend to reinforce the prejudices of whoever commissioned them in the first place. Not too surprising, eh? A larger question is whether there is anything more to good management than common sense tricked out in jargon. I used to work for a paper that hired new management consultants almost annually. We tried the Z theory, time management, you name it, we tried it. None of it ever improved the place a lot. And not one of the consultants ever noticed a fundamental fact about the nature of the enterprise — the difference between news and commodity — you can't plan for it. As a result, the place was always reduced to a state of panic when news occurred. "Oh my God, news!" They would cry in horror. "It's not in the budget, what shall we do?"

Pseudocontracardiovascularscholasticaryitis a.k.a. senioritis

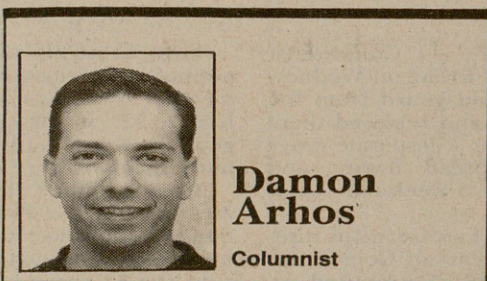
My name is Damon Arhos and I have a problem. It is kind of like a disease, but not really. It's not something that you can catch from being promiscuous, or from some strange germ or even from your roommate. But boy is it contagious.

And I finally admit it. I've got it.

Those scientific types call it pseudocontracardiovascularscholasticaryitis. But you and I know it as "I am a senior and I am sick of all of this work and I really want to graduate" disease.

It all started last week. After three tests and two presentations in one week, I thought I was home free until finals. And then it would just be one more semester, I would graduate in May and then I would go on to graduate school. (That is if someone was kind enough to let me in...)

So, I pranced over to the Journalism Department to have the old degree check done, just to make sure everything was O.K. And after a few minutes I had my unofficial transcript in my hot little hands. And the verdict? (Drumroll please...)



Damon Arhos
Columnist

22 HOURS LEFT. 22 HOURS? I just stared in amazement.

"WHAT DO YOU MEAN I HAVE 22 HOURS LEFT? I COULDN'T HAVE 22 HOURS LEFT! DIDN'T THAT BASKET-WEAVING CLASS I TOOK WHEN I WAS A SOPHOMORE COUNT FOR A HUMANITIES ELECTIVE? AFTER ALL, DON'T HUMANS WEAVE BASKETS? 22 HOURS? 22 HOURS? BUT I ONLY HAVE TO HAVE 128 HOURS TO GRADUATE! I WANT TO SEE THE HEAD OF THE DEPARTMENT! NO, I WANT TO SEE DR. MOBLEY OR PRESIDENT BUSH OR..."

Things went on like this for a while until I finally realized I had miscounted some general elective or some-

thing like that, and I will have to stay here a little bit longer than I thought I would. And Mom and Dad are turning cartwheels.

It was around this time the symptoms started setting in. I started hanging around with the wrong crowd. I ran with the bag monster and Mr. Procrastination. I had dreams about maroon elephants dancing around my bed, all wearing black graduation gowns and bashing me over the head with diplomas. And they kept screaming the same thing: "22 HOURS, 22 HOURS!" I can still hear their taunting snorts...

And one of the most traumatic things I had to do was tell everyone. It is not easy to admit to your friends you are incapable of counting to 128 by threes. Especially when most of them are going to be out of here in May. And to make matters worse, I had to sit through one of those "I tromped back and forth through the snow (uphill both ways) when I went to college and I took 25 hours a semester and ate a grape a day" lectures from my parents. I was about due for one of those any-

Slowly but surely I am starting to realize there are other seniors out there like me — those college students who never watched "Sesame Street" enough to learn how to count. There are others at this University who do not graduate when they plan to because they are lacking three hours general elective credits. And there are those seniors who are about to pass their hair out if they have one test or presentation or paper due like I am.

I am thinking about starting my own support group, "Aggies Against Pseudocontracardiovascularscholasticaryitis." So if you are a senior who is burned-out and fed-up, who is worried about maroon elephants and diplomas and is sick of all of those tests, presentations, projects and papers — YOU can't graduate EITHER. Let's get together. Maybe we could help each other drop the "diploma fee" option. It's fun.

Damon Arhos is a senior Journalism major and a columnist for The Battalion.

The Battalion

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