

Big Event should screen for opportunists

The time and efforts of at least 20 Big Event participants were wasted Saturday when these students showed up to help those who could have helped themselves.

The Big Event is one of the largest community service projects in the country, and students helped out many needy individuals and groups by picking up trash, painting and mowing.

Other students, however, arrived at expensive homes and were greeted by physically able hosts. For example, the hours that were devoted to edging a nice yard with the resident's brand-new Weed Eater could have been spent doing something truly worthwhile — helping people who *needed* help.

George Bush commended participants in the Big Event for "reaching out to needy individuals and families in the Bryan-College Station area."

Information given to those who participated in the Big Event said, "There are many people within our own community who are in desperate need of our help and they will now receive help because of you."

In the future, Big Event applicants wanting help should be screened. If the coordinators could meet with each applicant briefly and in person, the success of the Big Event wouldn't be overshadowed by opportunists looking for some free labor.

The Battalion Editorial Board

English as official language won't end cultural diversity

The words that you are now reading are in English. In fact, so are most, if not all, of the words in The Battalion. English seems to pop up everywhere: on most of the street signs, billboards, instruction manuals, pamphlets, TV shows, menus and advertisements in the United States. And I could go on.

Yet, the controversy over English as the official language of the United States continues. My question is, why?

Is it because many people believe that "official English" will mean "English only" everywhere? Or maybe because people feel that "official English" will make us lose our cultural identities and any smidgens of diversity? Or because the advocacy of English as the official language of the United States will allegedly promote racism and discrimination?

I hope not, because designating English as the official language of the U.S. will do none of these things.

English as the official language of the United States would simply mean that all government documents, including voting instructions, would be printed only in English. It *doesn't* mean that different languages can't be spoken anywhere. But it *does* mean that a whole lot of tax money can be saved by ceasing to print documents in more than one language.

Take California, for instance. Before it designated English as its state language, it was printing government documents and voting materials in *four* languages. This was a considerable expense to the taxpayers of that state. Thousands of dollars are now channeled to other budgetary concerns.

And as for cultural identity and diversity, both are a product of the individual, his background and his desire to retain his heritage. No matter if he was born in this country or came to it, every individual is shaped by his own past and upbringing.

For example, I am a second generation Greek, and I'm proud of it. My grandfather immigrated from Greece at the age of five speaking only Greek. I can remember Greek being spoken in my grandparents home quite frequently, and have learned quite a bit about my cultural heritage from my family.



Damon Arhos
Assistant Opinion Page Editor

My background and upbringing has taught me about my heritage. In no way do I feel that I have lost this heritage solely because I speak English instead of Greek. As for diversity, society is no less diverse because I can communicate with it.

How would it be possible for me to function in our American society if I *didn't* only speak Greek? How could I attend this University? How could I vote? How could I read a newspaper? If I *didn't* speak English, I would definitely be disadvantaged socially.

And discrimination and racism have no place here. No single race has been recognized with this policy. It is free of bias toward any other language, unlike many of the *documents* that are circulating in the U.S. today. It doesn't segregate; everyone is included. And it definitely doesn't discriminate — it only eliminates.

Also of main concern to many opponents of the program is the issue of bilingual education in schools. But this type of program segregates many hispanic students, making them feel inferior. With a more sensible immersion program, hispanic students would be taught English and then "immersed" into classes with their classmates. In this way, the students would pick up the language by intensive study in English. And in every foreign language class I've ever taken, the professor has stressed the importance of speaking the language as frequently as possible.

Try looking up the word "English" in the second college edition of Webster's New World Dictionary; it will tell you that English is the "official language" of the United States. Not yet, Mr. Webster, but soon, we hope.

Damon Arhos is a senior journalism major.

Put an end to rattlesnake roundups

Each year in Texas and other states, including Oklahoma, Alabama, Georgia and New Mexico, thousands of rattlesnakes are collected and killed in rattlesnake roundups. These roundups are primarily fund raising events for local community organizations, bringing in large amounts of money through the sales of hides, meats and, more recently, certain organs for use in East Asian folk medicine.

On the surface, these events may seem to be a worthwhile undertaking. However, there are serious ecological and moral considerations, the least of which is the inhumane treatment these animals receive at the hands of the rounduppers.

The primary method used to collect rattlesnakes for these events is gassing the snakes' winter denning sites. The snakes typically retreat during the winter to some sunny, rocky outcrop and hibernate in holes and crevices. Hunters for the roundups usually use a garden pump or copper tubing to spray gasoline into the dens to make the snakes emerge. Leaded gasoline is primarily used, since it is the least expensive type available.

Any animal using the den receives a dose of gasoline fumes and/or liquid gasoline. Any animal — be it a diamondback rattlesnake, a toad, a ground squirrel, a raccoon or an insect — is poisoned by gasoline. Many dens have been subjected to large enough quantities of gasoline to render them uninhabitable for snakes or anything else.

One study has shown that inhalation of the fumes causes loss of coordination and muscle control of animals. In addition, elements in leaded gasoline are toxic and some are known to cause

Troy Hibbits
Reader's Opinion

cancer (Remember, one of the sources of income for rattlesnake roundups is the sale of meat for human consumption — meat that has been exposed to toxic leaded gasoline.). What we have is intentional pollution of many areas in our state. Perhaps it is not as dramatic as the Exxon Valdez disaster, but it is a much more deplorable pollution because it is intentional.

Another serious ecological consideration is the effect that the large numbers of a major predatory species, the western diamondback rattlesnake, has on the environment. Snakes are the main predator on small rodents in many areas. Removal of large numbers of snakes causes rodent populations to rise which results in damage to crops and reduced crop yields.

Besides the obvious ecological problems of pouring gasoline into the ground and predator removal, there are moral considerations as well. Thousands of animals are being killed annually in these roundups. These animals are displayed, mistreated and tortured for the sake of human amusement.

People have often said to me, "It's just a snake!" Does that make the snakes any less deserving of humane treatment than a cocker spaniel or a sea otter?

It has also been said that there are a lot of snakes out there, so why worry about it? At one time there were *billions* of passenger pigeons and buffalo and now the passenger pigeon is extinct and the buffalo is restricted to a few

preserves.

Furthermore, at these roundups called safety demonstrations are performed. I have worked with venomous snakes on two research projects, and I don't consider handling rattlesnakes with your bare hands a "safety demonstration" (no matter how lethargic from gasoline poisoning the snake is). The best safety when dealing with a venomous snake is to leave it alone unless you are a trained herpetologist, a scientist who studies amphibians and reptiles.

Other events, like bag-stuffing contests where men have a time limit as many live rattlesnakes as possible into a burlap bag with their hands, take place as well. The example set for the many children in attendance is dangerous. In addition, roundups teach children that it is all right to abuse our natural resources and trivialize environmental concerns.

In a decade in which millions of dollars are spent annually for the protection of wildlife, it is absurd to allow the systematic destruction of a species for the sake of human pleasure and profit. No good comes from rattlesnake roundups. Even the venom that is "milked" from the snakes is wasted because it is not of the quality used in research or medicine.

Help save Texas' wildlife — not just rattlesnakes, but also the countless other animals that are affected by den gassing. Write your representative. Stop rattlesnake roundups.

Troy Hibbits is a sophomore wildlife and fisheries major and a member of the Texas Herpetological Society.

Mail Call

We're here for education

EDITOR:

I was so pleased to read the letter from Linda Sparks in the February 28th's Battalion because it was a classic example of a narrow-minded, ignorant, non-sensical Aggie. The best part of the letter was where Lindy asked us, "If you don't like traditions, why are you here?" What a great question! Gee ... let's see ... Texas A&M University. Oh, now I remember; I'm here to get an education! I'm sure that's what the great majority of people are here for.

A&M has one of the best engineering schools in the nation. If a person wants a good education in engineering at A&M, I think their belief in Aggie traditions is irrelevant. To an ignorant, narrow-minded person I'd guess you'd have to say, "There's more to Aggieland than just its traditions." You just don't place tradition ahead of everything — including common sense. Anyone that would hire an Aggie over a much better qualified person for a job simply because they're an Aggie must have no common sense.

Wendy Graham '92

'Eternity is a long time'

EDITOR:

In response to James Hammitt's letter Feb. 22, I simply ask him to consider the following. I am a Christian, I believe that God is the creator of the universe, and that those who place their faith in Jesus Christ, the Son of God, will go to Heaven after they die while those who do not, will go to Hell. Suppose I'm right. I will spend eternity in Heaven with God. Suppose I'm wrong. I will have lived my life by a set of beliefs that has made me happy. Now, James, suppose you are right. You have lived by a set of rules that, you say, has made you happy. Suppose you are wrong. You will spend eternity in Hell, separated from all that is good.

James, my worst possibility is exactly the same as your best! You say that you believe Jesus Christ was a great orator and intellectual. He also claimed to be the Son of God (Matthew 26:63-64). If you read His words, you will find that He must be either a liar, a lunatic or Lord. I believe the last, and I hope that you come to believe it too.

Suppose you are wrong, James. Eternity is a long time.

Bill Pirkle '93

Williams lacks experience

EDITOR:

Can Clayton Williams possibly be for real? Can he seriously be considering holding the highest elected office in the state? It is amazing how a man can base a campaign on an over-inflated ego and a bulging bank account. His far-fetched ideas such as criminals "bustin' rocks" and serving time at boot camp prisons (which, as proven by Ricker's Island in New York, are ineffective) are ridiculous and do nothing but highlight his complete and total lack of experience in the political arena.

It is also astounding how much support he has garnered simply because he is an Aggie. Are we so "Aggie-centric" that we will vote for this man (even though he has made repeated racist comments against blacks and hispanics) just because he graduated from Texas A&M? Will we support a man who has asked Governor Clements if being governor is "a full time job," and has stated that it's a "man's world" and doesn't want to run against a woman? Can we possibly place our trust in the hands of a man who makes jokes about rape, the most heinous and sick crime known to humankind?

This is a very sensitive time for Texas and we cannot afford to be henchmen for a bigoted, chauvanistic and immature idealist. If anything this behavior by Williams has been a slap in the face to Texas A&M and its loyal supporters. His comments and attitudes are reprehensible and beyond reproach. If Clayton Williams was to base his campaign on what's between his ears as opposed to what's between his legs, he might not come off as being so ignorant and insensitive.

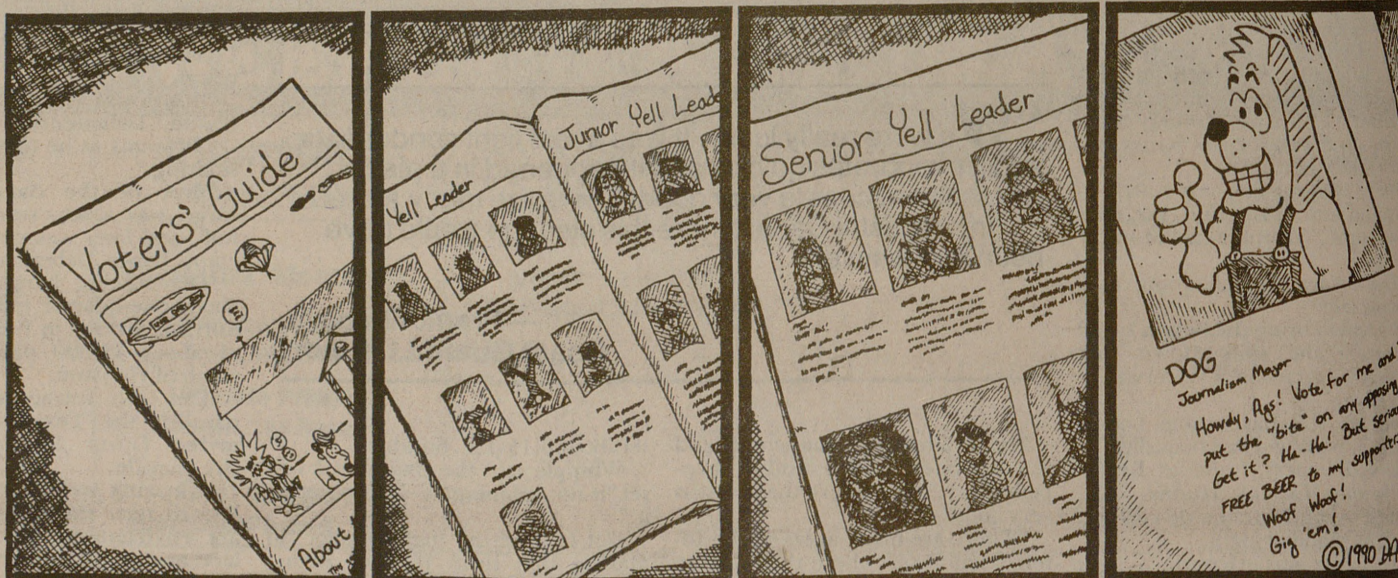
Gary P. Carroll, '88

Have an opinion? Express it!

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Adventures In Cartooning

by Don Atkinson Jr.



The Battalion

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