

Beauty pageants simply harmless

On Saturday, Suzanne Lawrence was crowned Miss Texas-America. You've got it — another beauty pageant.

And whenever there is a beauty pageant, there are always those people who say they are "sexist" or "degrading to women," and shouldn't be allowed to continue. Many of these people compare the women who participate to "meat," and criticize the entire selection process.

Just this past semester, there were protestors present at the Miss Texas A&M Scholarship Pageant who carried posters that said, "We're not cows" and "We're all beautiful." The Battalion article which covered the protest said, "Melissa Cuthbert, a junior English and women's studies major from Wisconsin, said the group staged the protest because the University was promoting the stereotype that women are useless unless they are beautiful."

But what real harm do pageants like A&M's do? Is it true that pageants like Miss U.S.A., Miss America and Miss Universe are detrimental to society as a whole? I doubt it.

No one seems to notice that these women voluntarily enter these pageants. It isn't like potential contestants are taken kicking and screaming into the wardrobe department. They spend weeks and sometimes months working on the pageants, and most contestants don't consider their activities as sexist in the least.

Yes, the contestants are judged on their beauty. It wouldn't be called a beauty contest if this weren't the case.

However, many pageants (such as the one here at A&M) require the participants to perform and include talent as part of the competition. Obviously, pageants the size of Miss Universe or Miss U.S.A. don't have the air time to show all of this talent, and as



Damon Arhos
Opinion Page Editor

a result they eliminate it. And even if they *did* have the time, we'd be stuck in front of our TV sets for two days watching all of it.

Those who are critical of beauty pageants also belittle the accomplishments of the women who participate in them.

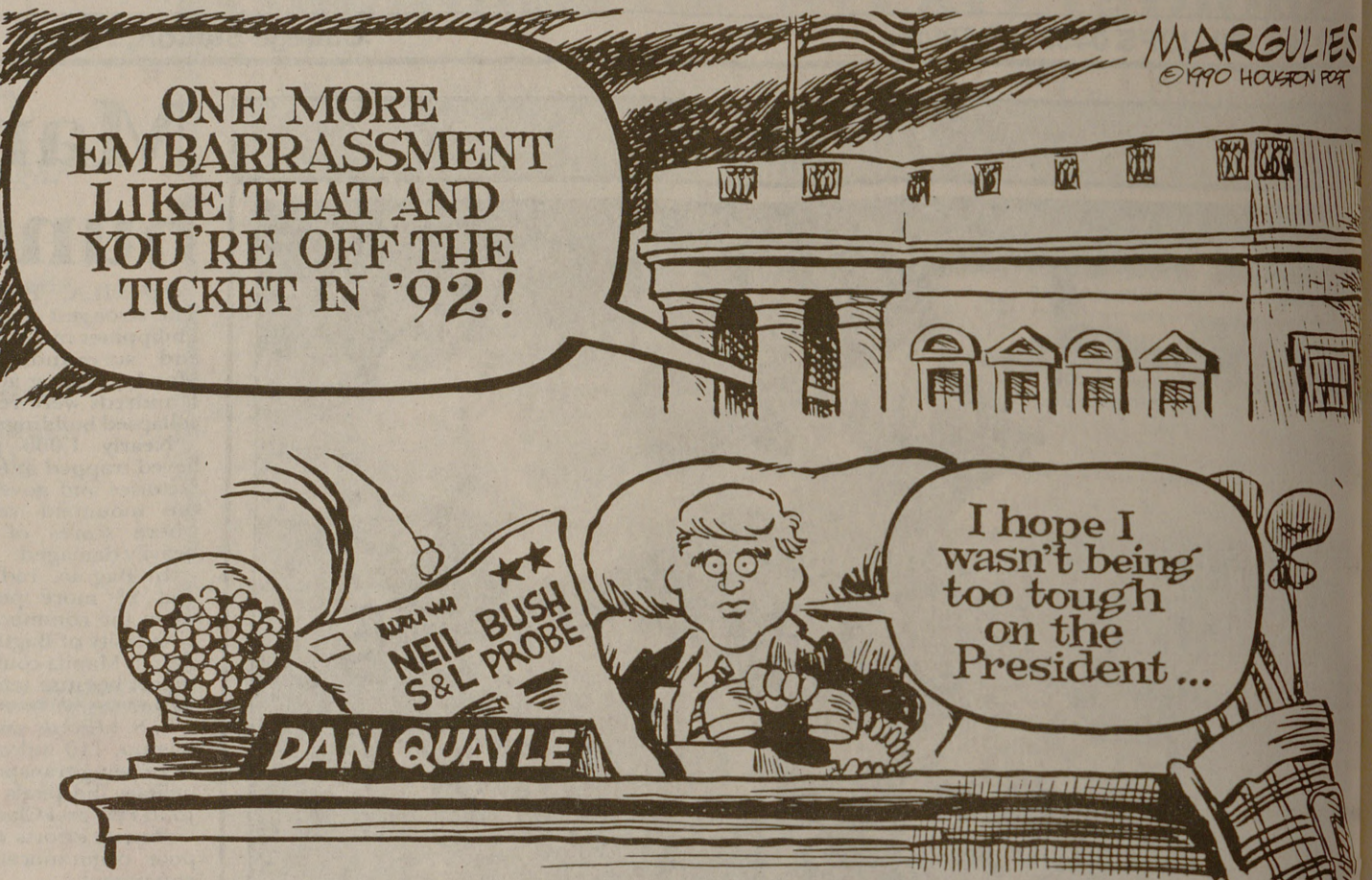
Take Suzanne Lawrence, for example. The newly crowned Miss Texas battled cervical cancer and had an ovarian tumor last year. After recovering from two operations for these ailments, she created a group called Smiles Against Cancer, which provides services for families affected by the disease.

And in the Houston Chronicle article that I read, Lawrence was described by her peers and past teachers as "focused," "persistent" and "positive." She is hardly a piece of "meat."

All of those people who downgrade pageants should take a second look at the motives behind these events. Beauty pageants are nothing but harmless competitions between women — women who have consented to work for their titles. If there are many negative aspects of the pageants, they are definitely outranked by the positive actions of the winners themselves.

So if you don't like the pageant scene yourself, just change the channel and don't spoil things for the rest of us.

Damon Arhos is a senior journalism major.



A&M's transportation problems call for more than just rethinking

Here at A&M, there exists a circumstance which mimics the entire U.S. system of transportation. The issue of public transportation calls for more than just a little rethinking.

Students, faculty, and staff need to get to their classes and jobs. In their spare time, they need to run various errands, go out for some fresh air, or just have a night on the town.

The parking situation, as it currently exists, presents many problems, namely space limitations, cost effectiveness and convenience. Buses can be thought of as a step in the right direction.

However, they are inefficient, inconvenient and overpriced; they are a prime example of a good concept that is misdirected in its efforts.

Walking and bike riding offer other viable alternatives, providing that the weather cooperates, you take the time to plan ahead, and you don't mind dressing the part of the sweaty voyeur.

The options available for solving this quandary become much clearer at this point: (A) build taller and more expansive parking facilities, (B) ignore the problem and hope that it goes away, or (C) encourage busing and public transportation.

The leadership of this University finds itself placed in the awkward position of having to choose amongst these options. Which solution will provide the best long term answer? Well, who better to address the burden of a stressful situation than our celebrated leader, Dr. William Mobley. In a fit of inspiration, he calls for a transportation summit amongst the influential parties.

He summons together the doers and thinkers of the University and of the Bryan-College Station community. The night before the much heralded summit, Mobley is feeling rather drained as he drifts off into a fit of restless sleep.

He awakens, sans the suit and other cumbersome bureaucratic power symbols, transported "Back to the Future" style to discover he is a college student once again.

Glancing at the calendar, he is astounded to find that the year is 1995 and the place is his beloved A&M campus.

Janice Squire
Reader's Opinion

He wanders, half dazed, toward the corner to a covered bus stop. A bus pulls up and a swarm of students begin freely boarding the vehicle. He wanders aboard and checks his pocket for a paltry amount of change. The driver motions him back toward the seats and he is aghast to realize that this bus is absolutely free.

Inside the bus he finds a sign that clearly delineates the routes. In fact, these buses are just part of a system that links the entire community.

This bus route is serviced every 10 minutes. Riding through the campus, he is amazed at the number of parking spaces.

Bill sits back to relax and picks up a copy of The Battalion that is next to him on the seat. It contains an article about the environmental benefits of decreased carbon monoxide emissions. Sandwiched right next to it is an article on budget propositions.

It seems the school has saved a bundle by cancelling plans for parking expansion. They have reallocated funding toward building better technical support in the classroom. "That's really fantastic," he thinks to himself.

He flips the page and notices an banner article about the unnecessary expense of owning and operating a vehicle. It says that less than 10 percent of the A&M faculty, staff and students own automobiles and that fewer than 15 percent of Bryan-College Station residents do so.

The nation's vehicle production has altered dramatically since President Bush unveiled a plan allotting federal funding to build and/or refurbish trains, monorails, trolleys and buses.

Glancing over his right shoulder, he sees a beautiful new building on the corner. He is curious and wants a better look so he signals the driver to drop him

off. By golly, it's the George Herbert Walker Bush Memorial Library! On the side of the building is a shiny gold plaque personally thanking Mobley for showing him a better way for the nation's future.

Wandering towards the MSC, he sees that the renovation has been completed and it looks exquisite. Some flyers are tacked to the kiosks encouraging students to ride the "party train" to Austin.

This party train is just a special reserved car for A&M students trying get to the hot party spots, or just to get home for a visit.

The trains are linked to communities throughout Texas. The local buses and trolleys also do double duty on Friday and Saturday evenings by shuttling people to and from local pubs, shopping malls, theaters and dining establishments.

A trolley line cuts right through the center of the four streets bordering campus. He learns that the students like to ride them in circles while they chat. They refer to this as "scooping and whooping in the Aggie loop." He thinks that's it! That's how I'll celebrate my wise and worthy intellect.

He quickly cuts across campus and leaps aboard the trolley. Passing the Dixie Chicken, he lets out a "WHOO!" for joy.

"Bill, wake up ... William!" He awakens with a start. Still sleepy-eyed, he glances into the eyes of his lovely wife. "Gosh, what a dream!" he says. "No, not a dream," he thinks to himself. "a plan ... a plan that we'll work on today."

For you see, dreams do become reality with the advent and follow-through of a plan.

I would like to urge the Bryan-College Station community, as well as A&M's administration and parking officials to take just a minute out of the busy schedules to examine the "big picture." A big eye, a small world, and an even smaller city; but every person makes a difference. The choice is yours.

Janice Squire is a graduate student in visualization sciences.

Poor not responsible for their situation

EDITOR:

Rudy Cordova Jr. expressed an obviously ignorant view of the cycle of poverty in his July 13 column. Cordova feels that the poor are "just not taking advantage of the many opportunities that are out there for them," and that "they have no one to blame for their poverty but themselves."

When an individual is born into poverty, it is poverty that becomes their teacher. When a child saps all the affection available from a destitute, uncaring home life and is rewarded by being a victim of sexual, physical and mental abuse, they consequently have little motivation to "get up and take advantage of their freedom." Maybe this individual will hit the streets at the ripe old age of 12, forsaking an education for mere survival.

Any successful person will tell you of someone who was their inspiration: a parent, a teacher or a friend. Someone who is successful at breaking the poverty cycle has a mentor. While some of us, probably including Cordova, had cereal, orange juice and cartoons on Saturday morning, others had stale beer, a kick in the face, and parents who noticed them only when they wanted someone to beat up.

Wake up Rudy. Take a drive down the streets of inner city Houston, Dallas or even Bryan. Look at the pain in the face of a 3-year-old baby whose mother is on the streets, a child herself and strung out on drugs. Suppose this child has never known a father. The child is without direction, without a mentor and without enough food. I guess Cordova thinks this baby is not taking advantage of the situation.

The solution to the problem of poverty has never been a clear-cut one. If people like Cordova would open their eyes, they would realize that America is not the land of equal opportunity that they believe it is.

Molly Drake '91

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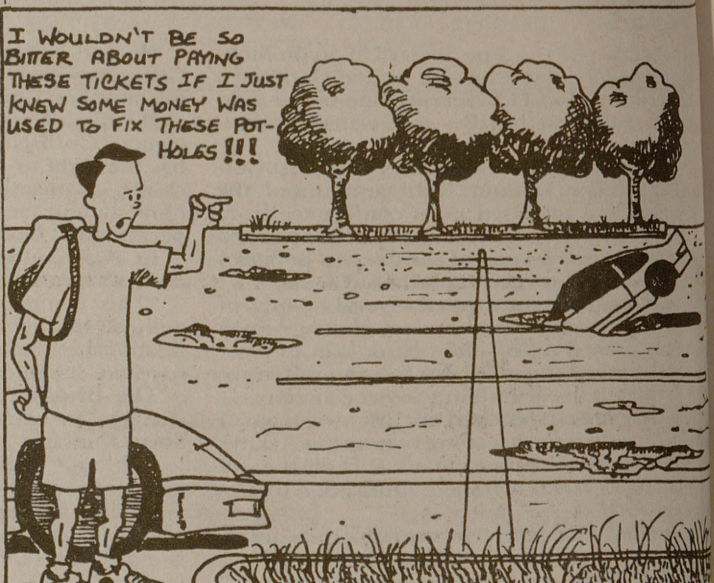
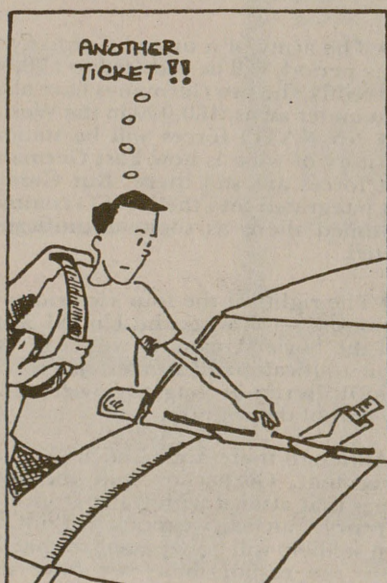
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