

Holidays expose cultural values

Social scientists claim to be able to learn much about a culture by studying that culture's holidays. That makes enough sense. What are the values that cause people to alter their normal routines? It is informative to find both the context of a social group's special days, as well as rituals associated with such days.

Timothy Truesdale
Columnist

Take indigenous American groups, for example. It's common to hear of American Indian groups that no longer wear traditional costumes daily, nor regularly engage in traditional rituals.

But many of those same groups will pull out the costumes and call in a "medicine man" for special holidays. Although their "routine" lives allow them to mix with American society at large, the way they celebrate holidays reveals much about their underlying cultural values.

The holidays observed by mass America also reveals much about our values. Two weeks ago, our nation celebrated one of its oldest and dearest rituals — Thanksgiving.

Every kindergarten child is well versed in the tradition of this holiday, which came to us from the Pilgrims. Our forefathers paused to give thanks for their safe arrival and material sustenance. However, as Professor John Canup pointed out in a recent story in *The Battalion*, Pilgrims celebrated days of penitence as well as days for thanks.

Why has our society chosen to leave behind one tradition, while keeping the other?

The nation is shocked, even incensed, by the recent savings and loan scandal. Yet, what seems to bother us most is not the scandal itself.

What bothers us the most is the refusal of all parties involved to accept blame for the irrespective contributions to the problem.

But how silly for us to expect our politicians to be heroic — surpassing ethical standards of the electorate! The reason we have no National Day of Penitence giving is simple: we no longer believe people are responsible for their actions.

A recent court decision in Maryland shows clearly how this principle works in our society.

John Leo reports in U.S. News that "A bodybuilder broke into six homes, set fire to three of them, and stole cash and jewelry." A judge ruled him guilty, but not criminally

We no longer have days of penitence in this country because we no are no longer penitent about anything. For I have to wonder how many families spent more time looking for the Alka-Seltzer than actually 'giving thanks' for anything on Thanksgiving Day.

responsible because his frenzied use of steroids left him "suffering from organic personality syndrome." No jail time!

We no longer have days of penitence in this country because we no are no longer penitent about anything. After all, why be sorry about something you have no control over, like "organic personality syndrome?"

There's another thing about Thanksgiving that interests me. It seems that the name for the holiday is quickly evolving into "Turkey Day."

While at first I was upset by this development, I was gradually appreciative of this attempt, as subtle as it is, to be honest with ourselves.

For I have to wonder how many families spent more time looking for the Alka-Seltzer than actually "giving thanks" for anything on Thanksgiving Day.

Come to think of it, I probably should be thankful for no day dedicated to fasting and repentance. After all, it would probably just become exploited by all of the diet companies in the nation. And I could hardly stand being wished a productive "Lose a Few Pounds Day."

No, its bad enough suffering through "Turkey Day" Thanksgivings, "Bunny Day" Easters, "Santa Claus Day" Christmases...

Timothy Truesdale is a graduate student in urban planning.

Mail Call

Stop destruction of trees

EDITOR:

During the past few weeks I have listened to and read many complaints about the waste of good trees on bonfire. At first I disagreed.

Bonfire is a deep Aggie tradition and should go on for eternity; but as I watched all of those poor defenseless trees burn, I cried.

What a total waste of good time and good trees — and all so that a million or so Ags and former Ags could have some personal enjoyment.

Well, it is too late to do anything about bonfire, so I propose we as Americans and Aggies stop the waste of good usable trees for our personal enjoyment and stop Christmas — yes, Christmas!

Think of all those trees tortured to death in the living rooms of America over a period of months. It simply must come to an end.

So why not start here in Aggieland and end the traditions of both Christmas and bonfire?

Furthermore, as long as we are ending waste, why not end football? Why don't we all go out this Saturday and tear down Kyle Field and make a sanctuary for trees, maybe even a playground for them, too.

David G. Presley

Proud to be an Aggie

EDITOR:

As I stood in the horseshoe of Memorial Stadium, in the midst of 80,000 screaming fans, I realized how proud I am to be an Aggie.

The simple fact that every Aggie carries the Spirit of Aggieland within, creates a special bond that cannot be broken by even the most obnoxious football teams and their fans.

The traditions at A&M never will be duplicated by any other school, and those who attempt are a sad sight in my eyes.

Let's face it, no other school has what it takes to be Aggies.

They say they hate us, but I think they wish they were a little more like us. Why else would they adopt our yells?

I am also proud of the fact that we are the friendliest campus around. We are widely known for our camaraderie and respect for each other and to those visiting our campus. That is apparent when our fans don't cheer when a player is injured.

No crowd of fans will ever be louder and more supportive than the 12th Man.

Not only do we show respect to fellow Aggies, but to other teams too (even though it seemed almost impossible last weekend).

We acknowledge their band, fans and traditions rather than trying to abusively drown them out.

To sum it up, we don't need to restrict other schools' traditions to look better because no one can compete.

I confidently can say that I would much rather be outscored and be called an Aggie, than to win and be known

as a t-sip.

Just remember, the SWC Championship lasts for a year, but the Spirit of Aggieland will burn forever!

Jennifer McGown '93

Thumbs up to bonfire workers

EDITOR:

On behalf of the Department of Student Affairs, we would like to thank everyone involved with bonfire for a job well done.

We really appreciate all the time and effort that was put into this tremendous display of Aggie Spirit!

Special thanks to the Bonfire Committee and the following people: Bill Kibler, bonfire adviser; Andrea Beshara; George Thomas; Jake Betty; Wade Tatman; Gene Zdziarski; Ann Coombes; Tim Sweeney; Rusty Thompson; Joey Dollins; Kellie Klavemann; Stephanie Evans; and Denise Garza.

Also to the senior and junior Redpots; Brownpots; climbers; Yellowpots; Women's Bonfire Committee; re-load crew; yell leaders; Aggie Band; Bonfire Subcommittee on Alcohol and Safety; University Police Department; Parking, Transit, and Traffic Department; Physical Plant Department; and KAMU/HSE.

The Department of Student Affairs

It's hugging season

EDITOR:

'Tis the season to be hugging, but believe it or not, I have not always held this opinion.

In fact, there was a time in my life when I seldom hugged anyone, even the members of my family. I didn't want to get close to people because I was afraid I would get hurt.

Hugging people meant opening up and becoming vulnerable, and I risked being either accepted by those I hugged — or rejected.

I've always wanted to make a significant difference in my world, and I finally realized what the world needed most was love.

I could take a small step in giving the world some love by risking rejection, and opening up to people with hugs.

I began by hugging maybe one, possibly two people a week, and today it's not unusual for me to hug anybody, even people I don't know.

Looking back, I don't think there had been anyone who has refused a hug from me. I know that for me, a hug from someone can make my day.

So, 'tis the season to be hugging...

LaRae Fischer '91

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(USPS 045 360)

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Opinions expressed in The Battalion are those of the editorial board or the author, and do not necessarily represent the opinions of Texas A&M administrators, faculty or the Board of Regents.

The Battalion is published daily, except Saturday, Sunday, holidays, exam periods and when school is not in session during fall and spring semesters; publication is Tuesday through Friday during the summer session. Newsroom: 845-3313.

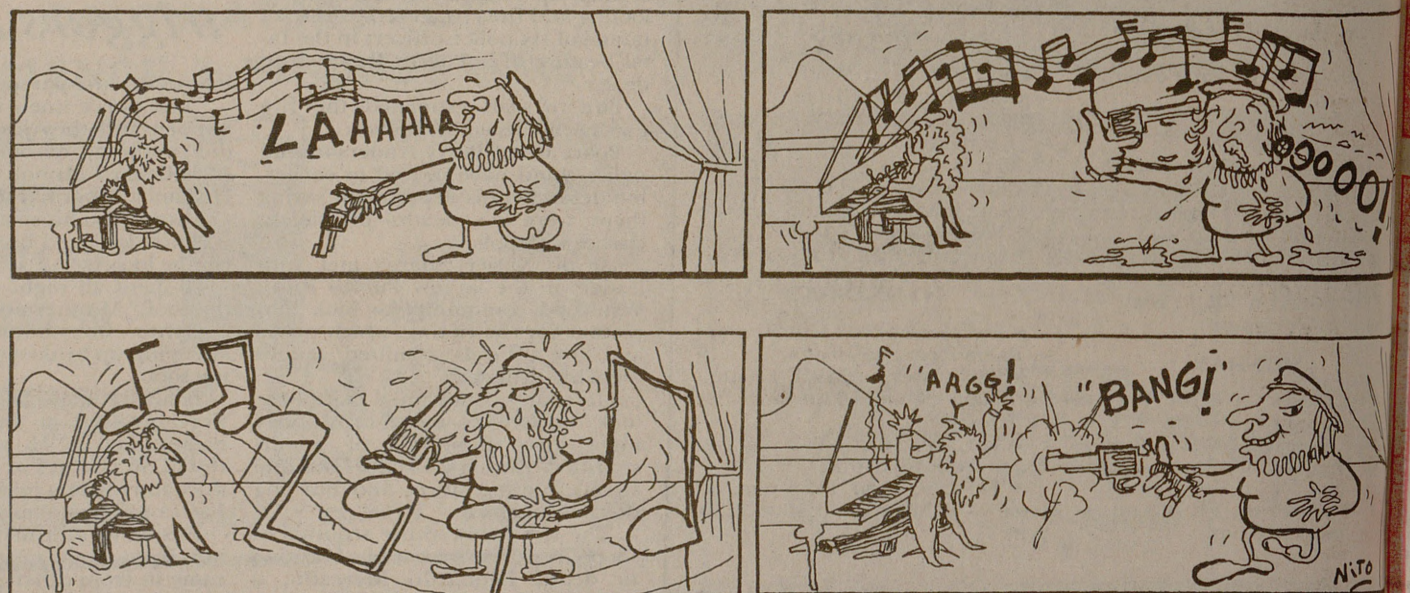
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Second class postage paid at College Station, TX 77843.

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

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