

Battalion steps backward

The irony of our current "student" newspaper's ideology is not only pathetic, it is embarrassing. Did you notice the quotes around the word *student*? Pretty clever, huh! Not really, I got the idea from a recent Ellen Hobbs column on the supposed abundance of discrimination and lack of multiculturalism at Texas A&M.

At one point in the article, she refers to her comrades by trade as "the liberal" media. Considering the recent bombardment of fundamentally liberal (let's call a spade a spade) stories, editorials and columns, I really don't know how she shuns the label with a straight face.

The following comments are intended to call into question the methods in which The Battalion works as an entity and not to attack any one individual.

The Battalion has been engaging in its own form of discrimination lately by filtering the news according to what it decides are the most important issues, stories, facts and opinions, and by spotlighting the news as it meets their agenda of liberal idealism. Apparently, for The Batt, non-discriminatory action and tolerance is a one-way street.

Let's look at a few examples of how The Battalion has recently held their liberal magnifying glass over issues that they alone have consistently judged to be of utmost importance and newsworthiness.

First of all, it should be noted that these are indeed issues and of consequential importance, but as far as how we as individuals or as a University view them and choose to address them, that is no concern of The Battalion. Period.

Here is an incomplete list of topics The Battalion is bent on enlightening us on by a flickering liberal's candle: feminism, capital punishment, discrimination, criminal rights, sexism, tolerance and multiculturalism. Many times the unnecessary liberal flavor of The Battalion detracts from the many things that it does so well.

Meg Greenfield, editorial page editor of The Washington Post, has accurately observed that "... the world according to journalism is, on the contrary, a surpassingly bleak place. A Martian reading about it might in fact suppose America to be composed entirely of abused minorities living in squalid and sadistically run state mental hospitals, except for a small elite of venal businessmen and county commissioners who are profiting from the unfortunates' misery."

April 8, 1991. The top-line story was about the whopping 30 members of the powerful Texans Against State Killing who valiantly marched from Huntsville to Austin in protest of the death penalty. To put the icing on this cake, when hundreds of people showed up the following day at the Capitol Building to protest the release of 85 convicted murderers, we didn't hear a peep out of The Battalion — much less a front page story.

On the very same front page, at the bottom, in bold headline, our attention was called to the late-breaking findings of a priest's study on what the Bible thinks about sodomy. (Seems a little self-explanatory when you consider what happened to the practice's hometown of Sodom — guess that's kind of why the press has dropped the term, huh?) Really though, Battalion, as if we really could not guess what someone is going to say who was invited by the GLSS. Thanks, though, for trying to let us all attend the meeting via journalistic affirmative action.

Then, if we turn to page two and look at the headlines there, we see Hobbs' column on why A&M should

Patrick Dixon
Reader's Opinion

be more multicultural and less discriminatory — and appropriately so, since she's an official member of our local conscience for proper social progress. Her April Fool's Day column, which used outdated statistics and irrelevant, antiquated comparisons, was similarly a condemning and cunning plea for the sodomite's agenda of militant perversion.

A more accurate report, for example, would have noted a \$3.5 billion 1991 budget for AIDS research — more than is given for the top 10 killers in the United States combined. She could have also offered that God, who she claimed to hold certain views of her own, offers a powerful and immediate solution through the new life and forgiveness that is found for anyone through the saving grace of the Lord Jesus Christ. (1 John 5:10-13).

Then from April 9 to April 12, we received story after story with typical one-sided reporting on why we should adopt a new discrimination clause designed to imply that A&M approves of sodomy as a legitimate and acceptable lifestyle and primarily to give lawyers another foothold to sue A&M in the almighty name of civil justice a la Ted Kennedy.

Such condonement and civil action, eventually in the form of quotas, etc., would only heighten tensions and incidents. As President Mobley's statement addressed, the real problem is personal harassment and abuse of anyone, which is only going to be solved through new hearts, not new words.

The Battalion's view on this issue has been made overwhelmingly clear. The Battalion's Life Style insert during the GLSS awareness week was evidence enough. It, too, was designed to make us all think that sodomy should just be viewed as a normal practice. Is it possible that The Battalion's environment is the sheltered one?

Finally, the Battalion's recent advice to Mobley concerning the discrimination policy is an outrage. Their little suggestion was titled "Texas A&M takes a step backward" and accredited to The Battalion Editorial Board. These editorial statements come across as some form of consensus student viewpoint or what it should be. The mere thought by The Battalion that we students don't have the correct ideology and somehow are never going to notice clumsy, overt journalistic ploys to consistently have their social agenda pushed on us is insulting and way out of line from any resemblance of journalistic ethics. Our student newspaper should refrain from acting as some ordained gatekeeper of information and simply report the news in a neutral manner and strive for at least some degree of balance among its columnists and cartoonists.

Cal Thomas, a columnist for the Los Angeles Times, has recently summarized this crisis from a national perspective most succinctly:

"Why do so many Americans distrust the press? It is because they perceive, correctly I think, that most journalists are not only marching to a different ideological drummer, they're marching in a different parade — one headed in the opposite direction from where a majority of Americans think this country should go."

Patrick Dixon is a graduate student in the MBA program.

University needs emphasis on learning instead of grades

Greg Mt. Joy
Columnist

Terrribly optimistic as it may sound, I'll be graduating next December. As you might well imagine, I couldn't be happier. Perhaps the only people who relish this fact with more joy than I, however, are my parents.

For the first time during my stay at Texas A&M, the first question they ask when they see me is, "When exactly are you going to graduate?" My answer always seems to elicit a speedy "Are you sure?"

These questions are a relief after four years of "How are your grades?"

It is entirely too ubiquitous a concept that this question is a conversation starter.

Well, as Homey the Clown would say, I don't think so.

For some reason, grades never seemed terribly important to me. For some silly, unsubstantiated reason, I've always tried to learn something first, and check on my grades later.

Texas A&M, I know from experience, and perhaps every other institution of higher learning in the nation, obviously does not agree.

It is difficult to pinpoint the culprit in this educational dilemma. Are students to blame for asking professors questions pertaining only to test material? What incentive do they have to look further? In many classes at A&M, none.

A recent review session in a literature class of mine yielded every possible query on test format. From scantron sizes to essay questions, we discussed the hell out of that test.

Finally, the professor demanded questions of substance, some that actually pertained to the ideas contained in the books we read.

He was answered with confused looks and a bad joke.

He and I were helpless. In an educational system geared toward nothing more than As and Bs, why learn more than the University says you have to?

Two hundred essay tests, ones that required an understanding of concepts and ideas authors slaved to present to readers, could never be graded in time, he said.

As a result, tests measuring our ability to memorize obscure and often trivial characters and places are thrown at us periodically.

Classroom discussions, as well as lectures, concerned themselves almost entirely with the same ideas and concepts a smaller class would have been tested on.

Students might have learned something from these, had they been provided any incentive to care. Many did not care.

Needless to say, attendance in this class suffered a drastic downswing after the first exam. Were it not for roll sheets and threats of lowered grades for low attendance, the room might well have been empty all semester.

My chemistry class exhibits a similar lack of substance. During a guest lecture recently, students stopped trying to figure out how to arrange hydrogen atoms in 3,3 demethyl hexane (don't fret, liberal arts majors, that term isn't necessary to the story) when they find out questions on the final will only ask about the carbon atoms.

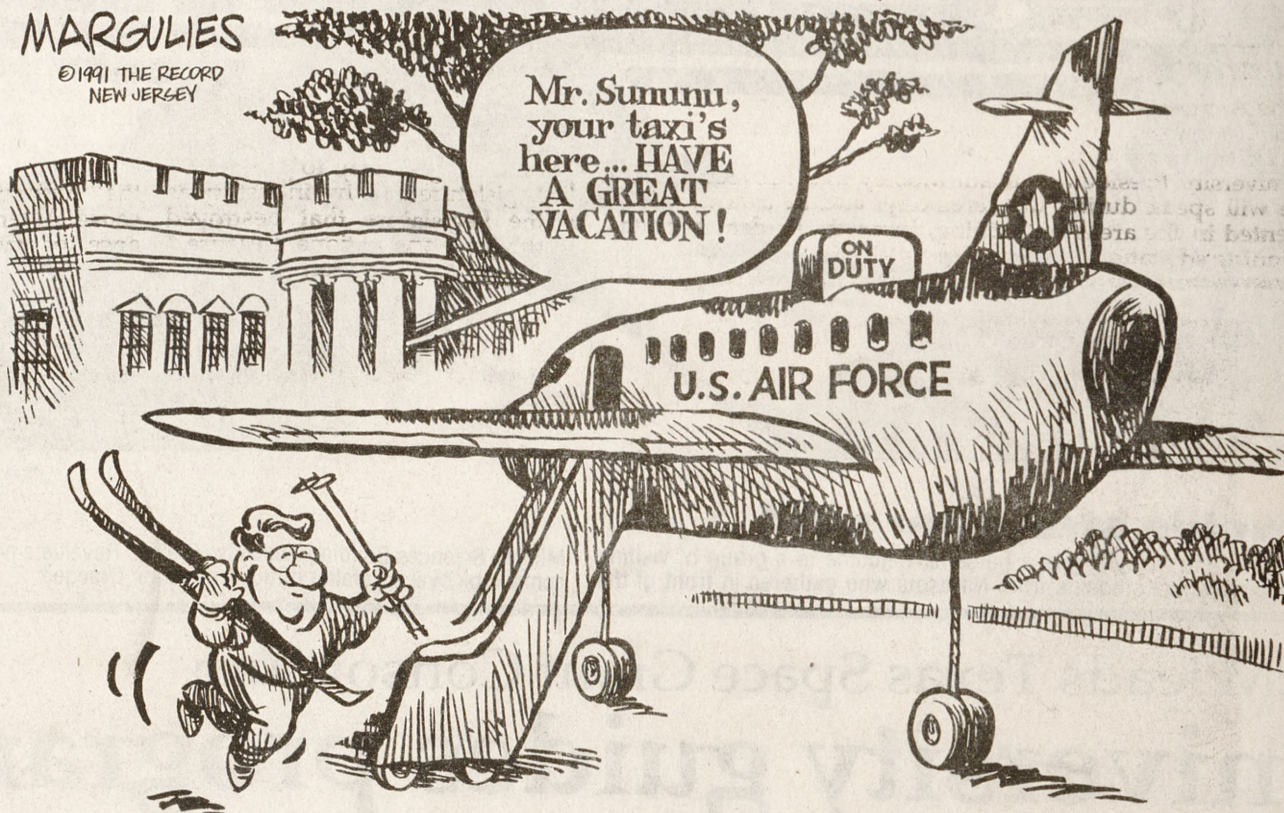
Teachers at A&M seem to all be trapped. Budget cuts lead to large classes. Large classes lead to inane, unsubstantive tests. I know—I've taken dozens of them.

Teachers are forced to issue homework, and hold pointless quizzes that kindergarten students could ace, just to get someone to show up.

Exactly how big an achievement is this? Corps cadets sleep, frat rats and S.B.s bitch about tickets daddy is going to be mad about paying, and an occasional Battalion gets read-education in action.

Meanwhile, President Bush issues an education agenda everyone knows is vague and directionless. A Texas school finance law is passed after missing more deadlines than I have, and still has no real financial backing. Texas A&M suffers severe budget cuts, yet pulls together enough money to build a multi-million dollar basketball complex for our oh-so-deserving team. Some said UNLV could compete in the NBA. The Aggies should be so lucky at the YMCA. At least we have our priorities straight.

Greg Mt. Joy is a senior journalism major.



MAIL CALL

The Battalion is interested in hearing from its readers and welcomes all letters to the editor. Please include name, classification, address and phone number on all letters. The editor reserves the right to edit letters for style and length. Because of limited space, shorter letters have a better chance of appearing. There is, however, no guarantee letters will appear. Letters may be brought to 216 Reed McDonald or sent to Campus Mail Stop 1111.

Apartments offer alternative

EDITOR:

As president of the student-run University Apartment Council of Texas Aggies (UCTA), I feel it is my duty to bring your attention to some important facts concerning the University-owned Brazos Duplexes. Although residents were served the "eviction" notice on April 1, they have until Aug. 31 to seek alternative accommodations.

One thing the notice failed to state was the possibility of students acquiring alternative accommodations in the remaining University Owned Apartments (651 units). This may have been due to the fact that it was a generic letter to both student and non-student residents in these duplexes.

Having talked with Mr. John Sodalak, Manager of the University Owned Apartments, I was assured that the students of the Brazos Duplexes who choose to apply for alternative housing with the University Owned Apartments will be accommodated over the next five months on a high priority basis. Some students have already chosen to do this. I suggest that other interested students do the same.

Graduate and Married Student Housing continues to be a problem at this University. With a waiting list of over 800 applications for such housing (approximately a 1-1½ year wait), the predicament continues to grow as the University strives to increase its graduate population. As students, we must share the blame for this predicament. If you do not speak out, you cannot be heard.

Sandra Burke
President, UACTA

No one person forms tradition

EDITOR:

Who decides when and what traditions should be established or destroyed at Texas A&M University? I think that an Aggie tradition can come from anywhere or anyone as long as it is accepted by the many individuals who form the spirit of Aggieland.

However, if a belief is important enough to be titled a tradition, it is something that one person alone could never destroy.

When I discovered that the 12th Man Kickoff Team might be substituted with a one-man pacifier, I was upset. This tradition was one of the first that I was introduced to upon coming to A&M, and I have learned to love it.

When I first saw the 12th Man Team hit the field, I felt a surge of pride knowing that those guys were a special part of our team.

They were the guys who played on a different field than the other players. Their field laid somewhere between astroturf and the stands where I was. They were a connecting link.

Now, this link is in danger of being cut. Who is it who thinks that this Aggie tradition is a pawn that can be put into a box and placed on a shelf to be forgotten?

If New Year's Day 1922 happens to find its way into the 90's whoever this is better be careful. Because the next time he takes a desperate look into the stands, there might not be any Fightin' Texas Aggie 12th Man.

Brad Wayne Porter '94

The Battalion

(USPS 045 360)

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