

Tuesday, June 11, 1991

The Battalion

EDITORIALS

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

Legislature need not play political games

In recent weeks, Congress and the president have feuded bitterly over proposed civil rights legislation. Unfortunately, our nation's leaders have tried to capitalize politically on this heated debate.

With such important legislation, now is not the time to play political games. The issue of civil rights should go beyond party loyalty and serve the general welfare. Representatives, Democrats or Republicans, should serve their constituents regardless of sex, color or political persuasion.

It is a sad comment on our society that we must make laws to protect the basic rights of individuals when every U.S. citizen should be accorded the same opportunities.

While we recognize the reality of differences between political parties, we believe the practice of bullying the "other" party into political submission is detrimental to the United States's domestic and international image.

We call on Congress and President Bush to set aside their political differences and reach an agreement beneficial to all Americans.

The Battalion Editorial Board

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.

Flaws in financial aid office

EDITOR:

And I had hoped that I was the only one! Yet, somehow, it was a strange relief to read Kurt Snyder's letter about the trouble he and his wife had with the financial aid office.

I am not married, but my parents can't afford to pay for my education. I am currently working two part-time jobs to pay for my share, and I am dependent upon financial aid to make up for the rest.

Since I knew that I would have to fill out a new financial aid form for the summer and the next year, I returned to the office in early March, which should have given me plenty of time to make the April 15th filing date. I asked then, as I had asked before, to see a counselor, since two members of my family had to have surgery, and I wanted to see how much this would change my "needy" status, or if there were any special programs I could qualify for. As before, I was denied access to a personal counselor, and the person at the front desk attempted to answer my questions. To this day, I have not been able to see a counselor because the receptionists will not let me! At least Kurt HAS a personal counselor to set him straight on the misinformation; I am left to my own resources.

The receptionist assured me that it was all on the form and I didn't need to see a counselor. I then asked her how to apply for aid for summer classes. Again, I was told it was all on the form. "Are there any extra papers to be filled out for summer aid?" I asked. It is all on the one standard form, I was told. "Is there anything at all special that I need to do for summer aid?" Once again, I was assured that it was all on the financial aid form, and to send it in as normal.

I took the form, and when I sat down to fill it out, along with my taxes, I noticed an extra sheet that the University had slipped into the instruction booklet, which gave a February deadline for summer school! This had not been posted anywhere in the office, nor was I told by the receptionist that I had missed the date. When I hadn't heard anything by mid-April, I decided to go by the office to check on my status. When the receptionist punched in my ID number, she told me, "Well, we don't have you down as ever having applied for summer aid." What?! The financial aid forms had been sent off in March! I told her this, and she pointed out an extra form on one of the shelves, telling me that I was supposed to have filled out one of those in order to be considered for summer aid. All this, when I had been told that it's all on the one form!

Trying to control my anger, I picked up the form to fill it out, only to see at the top that its deadline was April 1st. The receptionist had told me to take it to the loan office downstairs, but his sounded strange to me, so I asked the other one what to do with it, when I had finished filling out the page, which incidentally contained information that could have been easily collected from the standard form. She told me to put it in a large box, which sure enough had a label on it that indicated it was the right place.

By some miracle, I received a letter this week telling me that I had been approved for a Pell this summer. It also says that "Summer Pell Grant is available to students who are GRADUATING in August or December, 1991, or who will be CO-OP STUDENTS during the fall 1991 or spring 1992 semesters." I am none of these, so I wondered how I could qualify for this. I called the office to ask and could not get a straight answer. I went by the office to ask, and got two different answers from two different receptionists.

If the financial aid office continues refusing to let students like me see a personal counselor for the help they need, they should at least MAKE SURE THE RECEPTIONISTS KNOW WHAT THEY ARE TALKING ABOUT!!! This is a very important, even crucial factor for the students who have no other way to pay for the education they need. Funny -before I came to college, I had thought that the system was in place to HELP such students.

Tria Airheart '92

Phi Delta Theta gets slap on wrist

Trey Jacobson
Columnist

On June 7, this newspaper published a story about the TAMU chapter of the Phi Delta Theta fraternity being placed on probation for hazing. For the incoming fish and the uninformed, hazing is illegal and is a big time no-no in Aggieland. Hazing is so important to the University that hazing definitions and laws are published in each semester's schedule of classes. Texas law specifies allowable penalties for hazing that range from performance of community service to \$10,000 and two years in jail.

The Phi Deltas were busted for taking their pledges to a campout near La Grange. At this campout, the 10-member pledge class was subjected to sleep deprivation and extensive calisthenics. Many were forced to sleep outdoors without camping gear. Some time during the hazing incident, a pledge fell causing a hairline fracture in his arm.

The Phi Deltas' punishment for hazing: Probation of the frat's charter through next February, probation of TAMU recognition through next spring, an alcohol ban at the Phi Delta Theta house and at all fraternity functions, required sponsorship of a recognized speaker for a positive pledge program, required presentations to all fraternity members about the liabilities associated with hazing, required meetings with its organization adviser, a rewriting of the pledge program, and a required community service project. As you might interpret, the Phi Deltas only got a slap on the wrist.

Now, I don't want to pick on the Phi Deltas, because, almost every frat hazes its pledges in one way or another. I know of one A&M frat that forced its pledges to stay awake in the same room for 72 hours straight. During that time, they were required to eat foods that would gross anyone out.

Another frat, one that a former roommate pledged, chased him and his "brothers" around the campus and took them for "a ride." And just about everyone knows what those paddles the pledges carry around are used for. So, it can, with some degree of certitude, be concluded that TAMU fraternities continue to haze on this campus despite it being highly illegal and against University regulations.

But the Greeks at A&M are not alone in their pursuit of hazing activities. That secular school in Austin is renown for its

hazing activities, which have resulted in two pledge deaths since 1987. Earlier this spring, Texas Monthly published a lengthy story detailing the "anti-social" exploits of University of Texas fraternities. (Incidentally, if you want to be enlightened about fraternities and their members' mentality, I highly recommend this article.)

The article points out that pledges of different UT fraternities have been beaten, shot at from a distance, forced to have sex with prostitutes in front of video equipment and locked inside a room while being pelted with eggs. All of these activities have occurred since 1987 and the passage of the anti-hazing laws.

Although I have no empirical evidence to back this claim, these incidents suggest that the frequency and severity of fraternity pledge hazing has not been abated. And while hazing at the University of Texas may be more severe than it is here, under the present law fraternities will most likely continue to haze their pledges.

How can I make this claim? It is simple if you understand that hazing is a rite of passage, or if you like, a test of loyalty by which the pledge proves himself. To do away with hazing means doing away with the only tool known and used by fraternities to ensure conformance with the actions of the group.

Nevertheless, the good people of this state have spoken through their state representatives that they want no more hazing. If fraternity members are going to choose to disobey the laws made by the people of this land, we must find new ways to punish them for their illegal behavior.

We must also ask ourselves some very important questions. Does the current hazing law really work? Has it ever been enforced? And, is this University really committed to preventing hazing by student organizations? Only one thing is for certain: The regulations preventing hazing are about as effective as the speed limit signs lining our highways.

Until this University can find a way to dedicate itself to combatting hazing, it will continue in Aggieland.

What then, is the answer to preventing hazing? First, regulations intended to prevent hazing should not only punish frats when they're caught, but they should be able to deter other fraternities from continuing similar activities. This means that they should be extremely severe by fraternity standards. Maybe automatic expulsion of involved members from the University would work?

Much of the "punishment" inflicted on the Phi Deltas for their recent hazing incident was set forth by the Intrafraternity Council (IFC), a group of fraternity members supposedly regulating other fraternity members. While this may not seem like an effective means to punish the Greeks for breaking the law, the IFC did establish policies to attack close to where the frats live: alcohol.

However, if they really want to stop them, they should go to the heart of fraternity action and motivation: women. That's right, ban women from all fraternity functions. If you really want to see "brotherhood," eliminate all fraternity sisters, too.

Unfortunately, the biggest obstacle to eliminating hazing is discovering when violations occur. Not only is it difficult to monitor the TAMU fraternities which are spread out over approximately fifty square miles, but finding evidence after allegations have been made can be troublesome. And who should do the investigating? And what investigatory powers can they have? Although I spoke of the conformity of frat members earlier, I may be understating the typical cover-up that takes place when Universities and district attorneys investigate alleged fraternity violations.

So there we have it. Fraternities haze; in fact, they have always performed their Masonic rituals. They haze their pledges despite regulations against the activity and most likely, they will continue to haze in the future. If this University really wants to make a dent in the hazing that goes on under its nose, it should quit giving slaps on the wrist in cases where it knows hazing has occurred and go for blood. Don't let the next violator off so easy next time.

Trey Jacobson is a graduate student in public administration.



Car owners have rights too

Shannon and Geoffrey Pass
Reader's Opinion

I would like to make A&M students and faculty aware of an ongoing practice in our community. It would be easiest to describe what has happened to me. On Saturday, March 9, my husband and I had just finished washing our cars and decided to go to the Dixie Chicken for some lunch.

We each parked our car in the private lot located behind the Dixie Chicken. This lot is marked with a sign stating that parking is for patrons of the Dixie Chicken, Duddley's Draw, and Sticky Chins only. We left the parking lot to use the ATM machine located in the 7-11 store two doors down.

We were gone for approximately 3 minutes and as we were approaching the back door to the Dixie Chicken we noticed a wrecker truck had pulled up behind my husband's car, preparing to tow it. At this time we talked to the Dixie Chicken employee authorizing the towing and explained the situation. He told us to talk to the owner, which we did. The owner was unwilling to discuss or negotiate the situation.

Because of the way my car was parked, I was able to drive it away

before it could be towed. The employees of the wrecker company behaved very unprofessionally by way of cursing, insulting us and drinking beer while driving. We were unable to prevent my husband's car from being towed and were also required to drive to Bryan and pay \$82.50 in cash to retrieve it.

I have since spoken with the College Station police, the College Station city attorney, and the campus students' attorney. They have informed me that the owner of the Dixie Chicken has the legal right to tow any vehicle parked in his lot if the owner of that vehicle leaves the property at any time for any reason. The charges for towing vehicles are set by law and in our case we were overcharged approximately \$30.

In addition, wrecker companies must be licensed to tow in the city of

College Station. If enough complaints are received by a particular company, it could possibly endanger their license to tow.

I urge all car owners to know their legal rights and if in doubt in a towing situation, call the police immediately. It is not illegal to drive your car away before they can hook it up. In addition, if you feel you have been treated unfairly or cheated, report your complaints to the College Station city attorney so that illicit companies will lose their license to tow.

You can file a small claims court suit to recover money overcharged, however the cost to file is \$45 and may not be worth the effort. You can also write a letter to the Better Business Bureau reporting the event. In our case, my husband and I have decided to stop patronizing all of the businesses sharing that parking lot and have encouraged our friends to do so also.

Shannon Pass is a graduate student and Geoffrey Pass is a senior.

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