

## Gas station prices fail to reflect actual cost



**Tim Truesdale**  
Columnist

Gasoline doesn't cost enough. No, this is not a misprint. When we drive into the service station and fill our gas tanks, we always underpay. Let me explain:

A recent Scientific American article by Harold Hubbard called "The Real Cost of Energy" shows there are many costs associated with gasoline consumption which are not incorporated into the market price.

Take for example the money spent protecting oil supplies. Hubbard points out that in 1989 alone, the U.S. Department of Defense spent more than \$15 billion to safeguard oil supplies in the Persian Gulf.

This figure is on the conservative side—some analysts estimate that with indirect costs, the figure could have been as high as \$54 billion per year. Notice this is the amount paid in 1989. With the Gulf War in 1990 and 1991 the costs have surely been multiplied.

Unfortunately, there are other hidden costs as well. Hubbard cites a range of estimates between \$100 billion and \$300 billion per year for other hidden costs of energy, including "tax credits, environmental degradation, increased health care expenditures and lost employment."

**AM I A COMMUNIST TO POINT THIS OUT?** Actually, no. These facts should bother any free market capitalist. But one of the requirements for a competitive market system is the availability of complete information whenever making choices.

Unfortunately, this deflated price for gasoline has distorted economic decisions of policymakers and consumers alike.

There is currently a European firm which is seeking to connect various Texas cities through a "bullet train" network. They claim the operation will be able to pay for itself. Opponents scream that in the end the government will have to pump money in to keep it from going bankrupt. This is what is known as a "subsidy."

Subsidies are supposedly anti-American. But don't tell that to the people in the petroleum industry. According to "The Real Cost of Energy," the U.S. government subsidizes fuel producers to the tune of \$26 billion per year through tax credits and research funding.

I am not calling for all of us to become Amish and revert to using horse and buggy for transportation. But if we are going to subsidize, let's use our funding to promote transportation which uses this subsidized petroleum more

efficiently.

It is simply not efficient for one person to drive around in 3,000-4,000 pounds of steel. And even if it were, it would be ridiculous to think that this one machine could be most efficient for both downtown maneuverability and cross-country high speed trips.

However, with a reckless neglect for efficient transportation, our nation is now built on the highway. According to the Bryan Eagle, the U.S. Interstate system is "the greatest construction project in history." When the Central Artery project in Boston is completed in 1998, the system will have cost \$129 billion, and will include "forty-four thousand miles of four-lane plus, limited access, grade-separated, high-speed coast-to-coast and border to border highway."

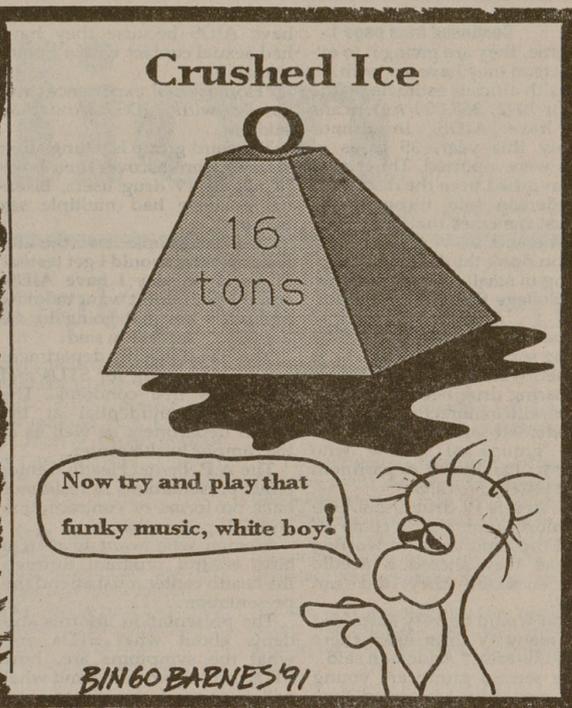
The cost per head will be relatively small—only about \$500 per person. But the cost to this country's cities has been life-threatening. The interstate made it easier for the wealthy to abandon the city in favor of idyllic suburbs. What was left was a shrinking tax base and a slumping civic concern.

Furthermore, this nation's unbalanced use of the automobile has done more to kill contact between diverse people than any university president's flimsy policy ever could. The more developed the highway system, the farther I can get away from people who are not like me. I may work in an area with diversity, but I can get into my car, roll up the window, and drive to my homogeneous suburb at the end of the day.

According to the Eagle, "In 1988, the U.S. Department of Transportation classified just 57 percent of the pavement in the Interstate Highway System as being in good condition."

I, for one, say let the highways rot. If petroleum production must be subsidized, then don't subsidize inefficient automobile usage as well. If we are ever going to get along with each other in this country, then we will have to create more opportunities to come into contact with each other. Why not start by shifting subsidies of automobile traffic to subsidies of public transport?

Tim Truesdale is a graduate student in urban planning.



## 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. There is no guarantee letters will appear. Letters may be brought to 216 Reed McDonald or sent to Campus Mail Stop 1111.

### Students need appreciation for library

EDITOR:

Recently I read a letter to the editor which mentioned the "poor reputation of the library." Having lived in College Station my entire life, I have used A&M's library for many years, and I have found little about which to complain. Compared to my high school's facilities, it had an incredible amount of relatively accessible information. Then this past year, I trekked off to Baltimore, to begin my college career at a prestigious and rather expensive university. It was not until I ventured into the library for my first term paper, that I fully appreciated Sterling C. Evans library. The library at school has only one copy of each book, of which there are not an awful lot. Our periodical and microfilm resources are an abomination, and it can take more than 30 minutes to get student monitors to look

up your film or journal (can we not find them ourselves?). In a high pressure institution like Johns Hopkins, there exist a number of "cutthroats," those students who, upon hearing an assigned topic, will rush to the library to check out every possible book on the topic, so that no other student will have access to that information. Coupled with the six-week checkout period, which can be extremely useful at times, any book that you want could be checked out until long after you need it. Also, due to the silly wishes of some wealthy alumni, no building on campus can be higher than HIS belltower, so the library extends four stories below ground - not an inspiring or comfortable atmosphere in which to study. Lastly, not only does one need a student ID to enter, the library closes at midnight during the week, and a paltry 2 a.m. during finals. There are many times I wish I had access to good old Sterling C. Evans when I needed information fast - let's be thankful we've got it right here.

Jennifer Wormuth, Johns Hopkins '94

## Parking vultures prey on Northgate revelers

I am writing in regard to the article run on the towing at Northgate. I wish I had seen the article before I parked there so I would have been forewarned, but... (sigh) that isn't the case. I first would like to make a correction to the article about the culpability of the towing. DUDLEY'S ISN'T responsible.

However, the Chicken is. The only people who have spotters (slimy morons who love to antagonize people) is the Chicken. As a matter of fact, people at Dudley's were quite helpful. The \$42.50 that I shelled out to get my car won't go to Dudley's or the Chicken because it went to my car.

The spotters at the Chicken also think this is great fun by all that I can tell. Instead of warning people, asking them to move or anything, they are like vultures ready to pounce on the carcass. These are some of the events which happened to my friends and me:

Case 1: Individual went to the newspaper racks THEN went into the CHICKEN!! to eat a burger...and got towed.

**Sandy Dillard**  
Reader's Opinion

Case 2: Individual was at Dudley's, went to the 7-Eleven to get more money and came back...and got towed.

Case 3: Individual went to Freebird's then to Dudley's... and got towed.

When questioned about his spotting techniques, one grease spot (a Chicken backporch spotter) said in a dull moronic voice "I can't read minds."

My only question is if I go into Dudley's through the back door and leave through the front how are they going to know? My advice to you is when you go to Northgate go into the Chicken (don't buy anything) or Dudley's (go ahead and buy something) first, then go to the other place you want to visit while there out the front door.

The second thing to do is bend someone's ear at the Chicken about this Philistine activity.

Sandy Dillard is a grad student

## Weekend beer bashes at A&M become new religion for those craving college-life excitement

You're in a crowded room squeezing through masses of humanity to find space to breathe. There's music blaring so loud you can't hear the person next to you. Strangely, several people surround a silver cask, pass cups of holy drink and pay homage to some unseen party god.

No, you're not at some oddball ceremony. You're at a keg party. Keg parties are now a social institution at A&M. When people want to party, limit brain cell usage to mere metabolic functions or seek any type of diversion from discrimination policy discussions, they go to keg parties.

Every Monday, the general buzz around campus focuses on the past weekend's frolicking. It seems more and more of us have chosen keg parties over such lively pastimes as dancing, renting videos or mastering Wednesday night bingo.

But what's the attraction? Why do we do it?

I took an informal and extremely

**Todd Stone**  
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patrol-person knows the quality of a keg party by merely counting the number of kegs on hand.

A party with seven or more kegs most would be considered a "kick ass" party. Two to six is pretty good, and just one keg is a mere scrabble-fest, not worth more than an informal hello while filling a few pitchers of beer before making a quick getaway.

Indeed, many proud males claim to be members of the "A&M Babe Patrol," and Aggie women gather to form the "A&M Beefcake Appreciation Society." Both groups gather at keg parties, but neither generally socialize successfully because the men tend to drool excessively after too many beers. For some reason, women have a problem with excessive saliva.

But a good keg party needs more than just kegs or flesh groups, it needs good partiers.

According to my informal poll, a good partier is not someone who is the most entertaining to be around, rather, a person who can consume the most beer and stay conscious long enough to talk about it.

Most partiers admit that a keg party has become a laboratory for sharpening partying skills, mainly drinking beer. The smaller the group of partiers that float (empty) a keg, the greater the partiers. Of course, if just one person floats a keg in an evening, he or she is a party god.

People who drink high quantities of alcohol without passing out are more revered. Folks that partied with pride should be throwing up the next day.

Many of the passionate party people told me proud stories of their daring partying feats of greatness with

alcohol. "I was partying hard," one partyperson boasted, "I drank a case of beer by 10 o'clock, fell down two flights of stairs and I didn't feel anything. "I just got out of traction last week," he said.

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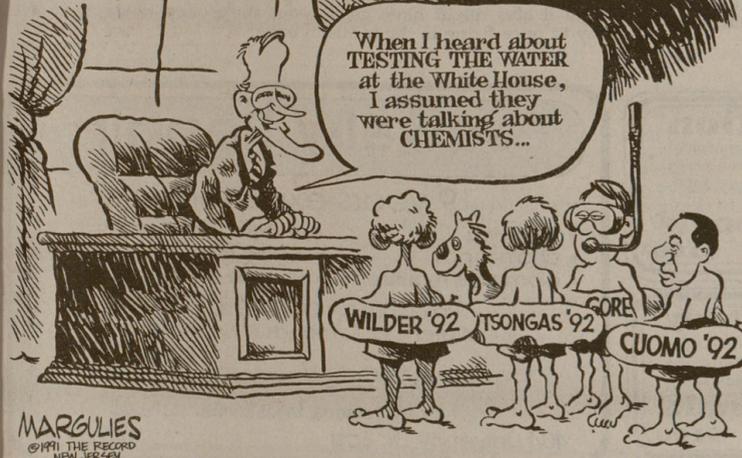
Pro-partiers are also rugged individualists. Partiers distinguish themselves by the vessel from which they drink. This ranges from a typical beer pitcher to a motorcycle helmet. One proud partier partakes from an ostrich-skin boot. At least that's what he has been told. It seems he can't remember.

My conclusion: Many go to keg parties to become professional partiers. They drink high quantities of alcohol within extremely uncomfortable surroundings, and inevitably, they call everybody "dude" by the end of the evening.

When I presented this conclusion to those polled partiers, they were shocked. They said keg parties are for light-hearted fun and meeting new and exciting people. At least that's the reason they were told. It seems they can't remember why they bothered.

Todd Stone is a grad student in business.

**Correction**  
Tuesday's edition of the Battalion incorrectly identified the author of a Reader's Opinion column about the Persian Gulf War. Mark A. Fletcher was the author of the Reader's Opinion. The Battalion regrets the error.



unscientific poll of keg party practitioners to learn more about this growing social phenomena. It seems that a good keg party is not based on quality socializing through various exchanges between interesting people. Often, a seasoned keg party