

Teachers not to blame for education problems

I am writing in response to the column by Tanya Williams (Sept. 27) on the unrealistic goals for education reform set by Bush.

While the idea behind the article, Bush is doing a poor job as the "education president," does seem to be true, part of it strongly offended me.

Half way through the column, Tanya semi-shifted the blame to teachers by saying they need to be better qualified, better prepared and truly interested in teaching.

The problem in most cases is not with the teacher but the home. Sad but true, parental support is often lacking in the area of education. I feel I can say this with some justification since most of my family is, or has been, a teacher. This includes both of my parents.

If we really want educational reform, teachers must receive the respect they deserve.

Teachers are not baby sitters that are there just to keep youth out of trouble for a few hours each day. On the average, baby sitters probably get paid more than our nation's teachers and are not expected to teach.

The fact that teachers skip or only skim many cultures is not their choice. The state has its own curriculum on what it thinks are the fundamental elements. If you do not like what is taught, complain to the state.

Teachers receive little or no incentive to go above and beyond the call of duty. The fact that anyone wants to teach is a miracle in itself.

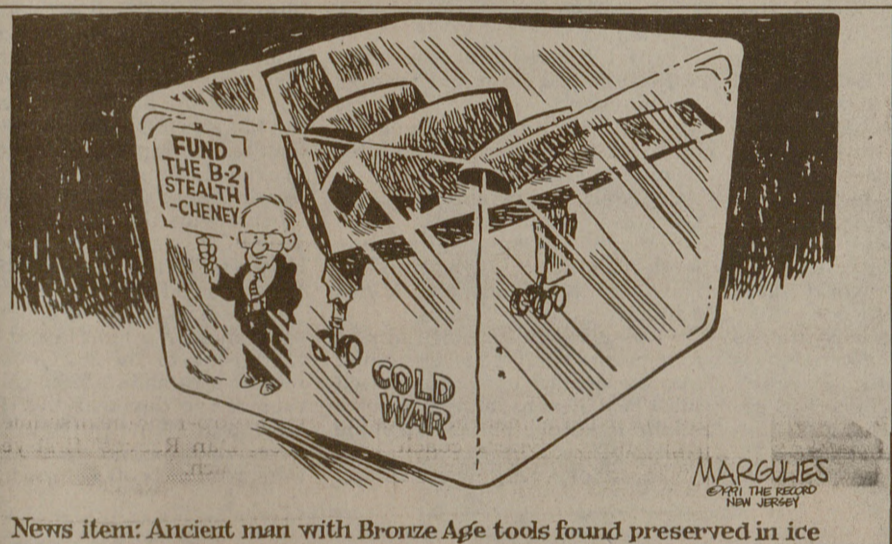
Their pay is low, complaints on job performance by both students and parents are numerous, discipline is not allowed for the most part, and the majority of students could care less if they learn or not.

Although education in the United States does need to be reformed, the blame should not be shoved off on our nation's teachers. The competence and ability to teach are present in the educational system, it only needs a little support from the public.

After all, only about one-third of a youth's day during 180 days of the year for 13 years is spent in the classroom. This should show that a good part of learning must occur outside of school.

Reader's Opinion

Scott Jeffrey is a sophomore mechanical engineering major.



News item: Ancient man with Bronze Age tools found preserved in ice

Think before committing

Pets depend on owners

There sure are a lot of college students with pets around here. I'm one of them.

But it strikes me odd that you see so many people with animals, and not just goldfish and hamsters, either. Dogs, cats, snakes, birds and other really serious pets.

It's odd because maintaining a pet like that takes a lot of money and time, and those are two things you often hear students complaining that they lack, at least in any abundance.

And that makes for bad owners.

There are a lot of good, responsible pet owners who are college students. But just as many, maybe more, shouldn't ever have gotten a pet in the first place. Unfortunately, the victims of bad pet ownership are the pets. The owners rarely suffer.

Recently, for several days in my neighborhood, a dog was running loose. A girl who lives near me had found him, put him on a leash and asked me if I knew who the owner was. The dog looked like a pure-bred, so even though the dog wore no collar, I was sure there must be an owner somewhere.

The girl and I looked around the neighborhood for the owner. Eventually, the girl found the owner, who said she had been trying to give the dog away because she couldn't keep him contained in the yard.

The dog, like I said, was probably pure-bred and was really very sweet and already housebroken. I couldn't believe it was so hard to find somebody who would adopt him, especially since the owner told the girl she had put an ad in the paper.

Already I had found a couple of people who volunteered to take the dog if I couldn't find the owner, so I sent the girl to take to those people, at least temporarily. The girl came back to me crying: A man called by the owner had come by to pick up the dog to be put to sleep.

Now, why did the owner of that dog have a pet in the first place? I have no idea. I've had some trouble keeping my dog in the yard, too, but I put a collar and a chain on him. You don't just kill a pet because you can't contain him.

Apparently there are a lot of people out there who think just because it's easy to get a pet it's easy to keep one. That's just not true. For one thing, it's quite expensive.

The first year I owned Cronkite, my big ol' hound, I spent about \$120 on an impacted wisdom tooth (I didn't even know dogs had wisdom teeth), \$75 on a sprained should and \$350 on a urinary tract infection. And that's only emergencies.

I also spent money on puppy shots, heartworm tests and pills, kennel fees, grooming, food, vitamins, flea medicine, toys, leashes, collars, chains, rabies tags, county tags, pet deposits and more.

And just because you have the money for a pet, that doesn't mean you have the time or even the interest. If you're not ready to spend some quality time with your animal, you're not ready for your animal. It's cruel to keep a dog tied up alone in a backyard all the time or a cat locked in a bedroom.

A pet is a long-term commitment. Most pets that you get now you still will have when you're 30.

Here are a few questions to ask yourself before you go to the shelter or breeder to get an animal:

- Am I willing to pay to transport this animal everywhere I go when I get out of college?
- Do I really feel strongly enough about this to live in housing that can be adapted for this animal for as long as he lives?

• Do I realize that every time I go on a road trip, I'm going to have to find and possibly pay someone to take responsibility for my pet?

• Am I ready to start spending more time at home to be fair to an animal?

• Do I realize that this pet can and will limit my lifestyle?

Pets are wonderful. There's no doubt about that. But pet ownership is more responsibility than owning a car or a house or any other object.

If you take on a pet, you're taking on a living being who will be totally dependent on you. If you can't handle it, don't do it.



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Mail Call

Respect others' right to free speech

Last week, when I read Ellen Hobbs' opinion page article suggesting the Corps be separated from ROTC, I thought the article was badly thought-out, showed a lack of understanding about the subject and was just downright silly.

A few days later, when I read The Battalion editor Timm Doolen's column about the harassing phone calls Hobbs and the Opinion Page editor had received for expressing their opinions, I was horrified, incensed, disgusted and frightened.

In no way do I always agree with all of the opinions expressed in The Battalion or other newspapers.

But there is one thing upon which those writers and I do agree. The right of free speech and free thought is everyone's right, no matter who they are or what their opinion.

What scares me about the harassment that the writers for The Battalion received is it points to a dangerous behavior. The people doing the harassing are trying to impose their beliefs and opinions on someone else in a forceful, violent way.

Stories are being reported from Haiti in which the government has been overthrown. Haitians are being murdered by their own military. Why? Because people are trying to impose their opinions on someone else in a forceful, violent way.

To the people who are harassing The Battalion writers, what is occurring in Haiti may seem like a long way from what they are doing. In reality, it is the same damn thing.

If you have an opinion, you have the right to express that opinion. But if you have an opinion, you do not have the right to force that opinion on someone else.

In most cases, I believe the people who try to change opinions by harassment are cowards. They will not stand up to the same public ridicule that people like Hobbs and Carrie Cavalier do every time they write a column.

Unfortunately, when cowards such as these receive support from people around them, they turn into Haitian military men, Russian dictators, Adolf Hitler or any other oppressor that history can name. We must not support nor condone this kind of behavior.

Our country has fought many battles to end this kind of oppression. Still it lingers on, even at this University. I hope we never have to fight for the rights that people like these would so quickly end.

I believe in my right to have an opinion without fear of harassment. I also believe that right is worth fighting for. If you try and take away my rights, you will have a heck of a time doing it.

Richard Brown '93

Hunting controls animal populations

On Monday, Sept. 30, we could not help but notice the ridiculous anti-hunting letter in Mail Call written by Stephen Silliman and Tracey Spoon.

We may not totally agree with Kevin McDaniel, but it seems obvious that Silliman and Spoon know very little about the dynamics of wildlife populations, wildlife management and sport hunting.

Although we are not Wildlife and Fisheries majors (Civil Engineering in our cases), we have both spent much more time in the rural outdoors than in a city. And for the last 21 years, our parents have been teaching us how to live and function in the outdoors while at the same time helping wildlife populations grow and become healthier.

Silliman and Spoon's statement that a "creature died not to feed a starving stomach; it died to quench the desire of an ego-centric sportsman" blatantly contradicts the nature of our upbringing.

Although there are a few "trash hunters" around who fit this description, the vast majority of the true sportsmen eat all of what they

kill, and never take more, even when the law allows.

Does it seem strange to you, Silliman and Spoon, that not all of a sportsman's food comes from a "store," wrapped in cellophane?

Also my roommate and I have always been year-round observers of all wildlife, and we greatly respect their beauty and right to existence.

We would like to ask the following question of Silliman and Spoon: Have you ever seen what happens to a population of white-tailed deer in a given area in which hunting is prohibited?

In case you have not, my roommate and I can tell you first hand that it is not one of the prettier sights to be seen in nature. Hunting is a much more humane option than simply letting animals starve to death or die of disease and malnutrition.

Before you go attacking hunters, you should take an ecology or wildlife conservation and management class (RENR 205 and WFSC 201), or try to get an educational clue elsewhere.

We would like to make an "ultimate" challenge to Silliman and Spoon: After both of you graduate, use a portion of that money you will likely earn with your A&M degree to buy a small tract of land (about 1500 to 2000 acres). After you obtain the land, set up your own management plan however you see fit.

At the same time, we will keep managing and, yes, hunting on our farm and ranch land just as our great-grandfathers did. After about 5 to 10 years we can compare notes and see who has more healthy wildlife on their land. I would be willing to bet that we win.

And by the way, Silliman and Spoon might find if shocking that we also enjoy non-consumptive activities such as day hiking, backpacking, camping, canoeing, and "just watching wildlife."

John Metting '93
Carlton Tanner '93

Have an opinion? Express it!

The Battalion is interested in hearing from its readers. All letters to the editor are welcome. Written letters must be signed and include classification, address and daytime phone number for verification purposes. Anonymous letters will not be published.

The Battalion reserves the right to edit all letters for length, style and accuracy. There is no guarantee letters will appear.

Letters may be brought to 013 Reed McDonald, sent to Campus Mail Stop 1111 or can be faxed to 845-5408.

Why increase transcript fee by \$2?

Cleaver's top 40 A&M questionable fees:

Here is another of the University's wonder fees.

As you know, the transcript fee was increased from \$3 to \$5 per copy. Where is the \$2 going?

The price of paper didn't change. The machine that puts out the copy has long been paid for, and even if it hasn't, it has depreciated enough so that the cost is minimal. The machine that stamps the transcript is in the same position as the copier.

Even though mailing costs are included in the fee (whether you pick it up or have it mailed), envelopes and postage have not increased. Allowing for the inflation rate, the price should not have increased due to the fact A&M was making a profit when the price was \$3.

So who gets the additional \$2 and why was it needed?

Randy DeWeese '93

'Uncover' confuses some visitors

Hey Ags, what happened to the "class" in "world class University?"

I was thoroughly embarrassed at the USL yell practice. I was standing next to some people who had never been to yell before. One of the men was wearing a hat.

When yell started, I only heard "uncover" once. Then it turned into "un#?!*%lcover" and finally into "take your !@#\$\$ hat off" (bad bull).

This man was attending yell for the first time. With all the obscenities being yelled at him, he probably left Texas A&M with a bad impression of Aggies (even worse bull).

Next time, if uncover does not work, just say "take off your hat" politely.

It will work, trust me. Let's show people that Aggies are (and always will be) a "class act."

James Durst '92