

## Prophylactics help stop spread of AIDS

Some sexually transmitted diseases cannot penetrate latex contraceptives

In the Nov. 22 issue of The Battalion, Mark Doucet presented a mutilated version of Christina Maimarides' column about the need to increase AIDS awareness.

That column was by no means a eulogy to Magic Johnson or a praise of promiscuity. The mere fact that Magic and other self-confessed promiscuous individuals have become victims of the AIDS virus is enough to show that there is nothing to gain from such behaviors than short-term satisfaction and risk of infection and of infecting others. Magic was plainly used as an example of the fact that AIDS can touch each one of us.

Even if we don't get this deadly disease, someone we love or look up to might get it, and we must be aware of this, and ready to deal with it.

The purpose of Maimarides' column was to stress the need for AIDS awareness, especially among teenagers. However, Maimarides did not reject abstinence as a prevention method. Abstinence, without doubt, is the best preventive strategy and should be encouraged to practice this.

But in the majority of cases, we are dealing with sexually active individuals who do not consider giving up sex an option (Patterson and Kim, 1990).

Therefore, Maimarides concluded that if we want to decrease the risk of transmitting the AIDS virus, then we should encourage every sexually active individual to use condoms.

They might not be the safest method, but they sure are much safer than no protection at all.

Doucet's ability to read Maimarides' column, season it with his personal beliefs, "boil it in his mind" to the point that her messages are evaporated and only his are left behind, and then serve it to The Battalion readers as her product is not only intriguing but also quite entertaining.

What is alarming is the misinformation that he serves us on the same platter in his letter. The dangerous misconceptions that he and apparently lots of others on this campus hold demand to be addressed so the true facts about AIDS and the importance of using condoms become widely known.

It's comforting to believe that only few of our teens are sexually active. The reality, however, is far less comforting, particularly for people like Doucet. Studies made in 1990 by Patterson and Kim reveal that 1 in 5 of our nation's children have sex by the age of 13, and 2 out of 3 by the age of 16.

These are the facts. And we have to acknowledge them and deal with them. We should teach our teens the value of abstinence.

But to teach only abstinence will not work, because they decide to be sexually active.

Since our teens are sexually active in their majority, we have to educate them in using safer practices.

For the ones who choose abstinence, great! They are safe. For those who

don't see abstinence as an option they want to take, we should provide knowledge of safer methods, along with the advantages, disadvantages and risks involved.

Which brings me to the second part of my letter which deals with the use of condoms as a strategy for AIDS prevention. Doucet claims that since "the AIDS virus is 5 times smaller than the smallest pore on a condom, the safe sex philosophy is a death wish." This statement is imprecise.

On the contrary, laboratory studies have shown that latex condoms are an efficient barrier against the sexual transmission of AIDS related viruses and other sexually transmitted diseases, including gonorrhea, chlamydia infection, herpes and hepatitis B (Van de Perre et al, 1987). Moreover, the molecules used in testing latex condoms are several logs smaller than the HIV virus, the gonococcus, the chlamydial elementary body, the herpes simplex virus and the hepatitis B virus (F.N. Judson, 1989).

Consequently, since the smaller molecules cannot permeate the latex membrane, it follows that the bigger ones can't either. For even greater protection, the Center for Disease Control encourages the use of spermicidal condoms.

The conclusion is that the correct use of spermicides and condoms in every sexual intercourse experience does provide a substantial protection against the transmittal of the AIDS causing virus and other sexually transmitted diseases.

Maimarides' message is simple and clear. AIDS in this country currently is a high risk group disease. But in the Caribbean and in the African countries, the proportion of men to women with AIDS is 1:1. Do we have to reach this ratio before we start worrying?

To promote safer sex is not the same as condoning promiscuity.

Even though abstinence is the best strategy for the prevention of AIDS, safer sex by using spermicidal latex condoms is a highly effective alternative for those who choose to be sexually active.

It is up to each individual to decide which prevention strategy is the one for them.

But our health care and social education systems have to make sure that each individual knows all the facts associated with each option and the possible consequences and inadequacies of each.

AIDS is too important to hold misconceptions about it.

Camus, in "The Plague," put it this way: "There are pestilences, and there are victims, and it's up to us, as far as possible, not to join forces with the pestilences."

AIDS awareness and Maimarides' campaign for AIDS education is all about that because, ultimately, only through awareness and education can we effectively and decisively combat this disease.

## POGO



APLOGUES TO WAIT KELLY  
MARGULIES  
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NEW JERSEY

### Reader's Opinion

Frank Schnorrenberg is a graduate student in computer science.

### Government spending runs rampant

## Have conservatives disappeared?

I thought I knew what a conservative was. I thought I was one. Perhaps I was mistaken. I took a little informal poll and asked people, "What is a conservative?" There are a number of different points of view. Some of the responses I got were: Republicans; people who hate change; Libertarians; yuppie scum; people who look forward to Billy Graham; Fascists; people with lots of money. Let's take a look at what Mr. Webster says.

**Conservative (n)** 2. One who wishes to preserve traditions or institutions and resists innovation or change.

While I'm at it, let's give the "L" word equal time.

**Liberal (n)** 2. Free to give or bestow; generous; giving largely; 4. Free, not literal or strict; 5. Not narrow or bigoted; broad-minded; 7. Favoring reform or progress; specifically, favoring political reforms tending toward democracy and personal freedom for the individual.

I'm amazed. As often as I've heard politicians toss the terms around, I thought the two words were opposites or at least somehow related. Maybe "fiscally conservative" is what I thought I was.

Since I'm being political here, let me quickly pass some of this buck to President Ronald Reagan, Phil Gramm and others who helped me formulate my erroneous definitions. (I used to respect these people a lot, but I've gotten over it.)

Please take a moment to look over the table I've included. Take your time — there's a bunch of interesting data there. Go ahead, I'll wait for you.

This is the most frightening block of stuff these fingers have ever typed. Stephen King can't touch this. This country has borrowed more money during this "conservative revolution" than in all the rest of our history combined.

Look at that debt column grow! It has gone from 34 percent of the gross national product in 1980 to a whopping 64 percent this year. We would have to close down the federal government completely for three years to pay this off. Aren't you glad a bunch of generous liberals

weren't in charge?

Just imagine how much beans and bacon our government could be buying with the megabucks we are spending on interest. In 1981, you could buy a certificate of deposit that paid 18 percent, almost triple today's rates. Picture our national debt accruing three times as much interest. It's not just possible, it's probable!

I admit it, Reagan suckered me in completely with his pledges of shrinking the government, balancing the budget and making government less intrusive ... zero for three. What a sweet old man, the official national grandfather, world-class liar. He probably won't live long enough to see his debts paid off. But you and I certainly will have to deal with them.

What's happened to those old conservative ideals? Democrats and Republicans have become 95 percent identical. Everybody's conservative, wanting to get tough with something or somebody. Not only have these folks failed to balance the budget, shrink government and make us all kinder and gentler people, they have accomplished exactly the opposite.

Government is growing like a weed. All kinds of money is being spent to drive people away from the law. Already we've jailed more of our population than any other western nation (except South Africa) and we're still building prisons on every corner. Every time another busybody law is passed, like age limits on tobacco, tougher limits on alcohol, seatbelt laws, curfews, firearms restrictions, helmet laws, another substantial segment of the population loses a little more respect for government and its laws. Hell, I wore a helmet and seatbelt before it was required, but now I'm mad.

Our courts and jails are already swamped to the point that real criminals are pouring through the cracks.

Do you think Americans are worse than they were 10 years ago? I think they're the same, but with half as much respect for the law and the politicians who represent it.

"Keep Right" they say. Right of what? South Africa? I still like the "intrude less, spend less" plan. Where have my conservatives gone?

### Joe Huddleston

Huddleston is a senior economics major.

Budget of the U.S. Government  
(in billions of dollars)

YEAR	OUTLAYS	DEFICIT	DEBT	GNP
1980	590.9	73.8	908.5	2,670.6
1981	678.2	78.9	994.3	2,986.4
1982	745.7	127.9	1,136.8	3,139.1
1983	808.3	207.8	1,371.2	3,321.9
1984	851.8	185.3	1,564.1	3,687.7
1985	946.3	212.3	1,817.0	3,952.4
1986	990.3	221.2	2,120.1	4,180.8
1987	1,003.8	149.7	2,345.6	4,424.7
1988	1,064.1	155.1	2,600.8	4,780.4
1989	1,144.1	153.4	2,867.5	5,131.3
1990	1,251.7	220.4	3,206.3	5,405.6
1991	1,409.6	318.1	3,617.8	5,615.8
1992	1,445.9	280.9	4,021.1	5,985.5

## Mail Call

### Arson incident shocks students

I would like to discuss an event that occurred on campus yesterday that has affected many people. Monday, at 5:30 a.m., the office of Dr. P.T. Eubank (thermodynamics and chemical engineering professor) was set ablaze by arson. One possible motive for this unnecessary act was that he gave a difficult exam to his thermodynamics class this past Tuesday.

Now that exam was difficult, but it was not the hardest test I have ever taken. And, in any case, arson is not a rational way to deal with declining grades. In fact, a difficult exam is never justification for such an extreme, destructive act. If grades are falling, the responsible student should either study harder or speak with that professor individually.

The engineering faculty realizes that the arson does not reflect the intentions of the chemical engineering undergraduates and is the action of one troubled individual.

In the end, arson costs the students and tarnishes Texas A&M's national reputation. Eubank is a well-liked person and a respected thermodynamics professor who has been teaching at this

University for over 30 years. We would like to express our support for Eubank and the chemical engineering faculty and our regrets that such damage has occurred.

Leslie Fisher '91  
accompanied by 32 signatures

### Antifreeze kills small animals

Every year as the weather starts to turn cold and car owners begin their winter preventative maintenance, pets start dying from antifreeze poisoning.

Antifreeze is 95 percent ethylene glycol. While ethylene glycol is not very toxic by itself, inside the body (animal or person), it is converted to several compounds which can be and often are lethal. The compound is very sweet. Some animals drink antifreeze because of its taste, while others, particularly cats, ingest the drug as they groom their feet or hair.

Within one or two hours following ingestion of as little as a tablespoon for a small (10 pound) animal, or a one-half cup for a larger (60 pound) animal, signs of poisoning may occur. The pet

may appear depressed and perhaps even "drunk" and may vomit. As the compound is converted to more toxic components in the body, depression worsens, the animal may begin to breathe very rapidly, and it may drink more water or urinate more frequently than normal. The signs may appear from 12 to 24 hours after ingestion. Within a day and a half after drinking the antifreeze, most poisoned animals develop kidney failure. Unfortunately, kidney failure is usually irreversible and untreatable. Seizures may occur as the illness continues.

Within the last week, the Texas Veterinary Teaching Hospital has treated four dogs for antifreeze poisoning; all have died. Three dogs were "pals" from the same household.

Antifreeze poisoning can be largely avoided by its conscientious use and disposal. Used antifreeze should be bottled and taken to a mechanic shop for proper disposal. Environmental contamination should be avoided; any solution which does spill should be well-diluted with water and washed away. Even if you do not own pets, consider those around you who do. Be aware that wildlife are also susceptible to its toxic effects, as are children not old enough to resist the taste.

If you are a pet owner and notice ethylene glycol in the area (easily noted by its yellow-green color), make every attempt to clean the area

and keep your pet away. Finally, if you suspect the your pet has ingested ethylene glycol, it is critical to take your pet to a veterinarian for treatment right away. Most damage occurs within the first 12 hours of ingestion. Antifreeze poisoning can be treated, but treatment has to be started as early as possible. If you own more than one pet and they tend to "pal" around, have all animals examined if one ingests the poison.

If you have any questions regarding antifreeze poisoning or its treatment, please call your veterinarian.

Dawn Merton Boothe, DVM  
Katrina Mealey, DVM  
accompanied by two signatures

### Have an opinion? Express it!

The Battalion is interested in hearing from its readers. All letters to the editor are welcome. Written letter must be no longer than 200 words. 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.