

The Battalion Editorial Board

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The following opinions are a consensus of The Battalion opinion staff and senior editors.

AIDS education

Small-town shock proves necessity

Reports of HIV-infected students at a small northeast Texas high school has upset both students and high school officials. "I was devastated," said Julie Hamm, 15-year-old sophomore at the high school. "I can't believe that many people, you know have the AIDS virus. Should I be around them? Should I go out with this guy? You know, you're scared."

School officials Thursday reported in a press conference that six of the 197, 3 percent of the students at Rivercrest High School in Joliet, Texas, were infected with the human immunodeficiency virus. That number is six times the national infection average of one in 250 people.

While the findings shocked the residents of the small town, the revelation also sends a message to the public at large that kids still are not getting the message.

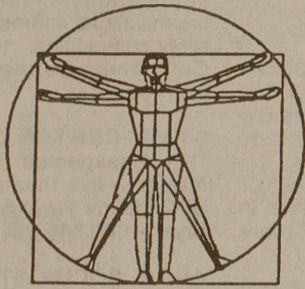
If administrators had shown films and possibly started a panic among students about the dangers of unprotected sex and the results of the AIDS virus, these reports of such a high percentage would not have occurred. The praising of school administrators is

just an example of how unaware Texans and other Americans are about the seriousness of AIDS in our present and future communities.

According to a Texas Department of Health survey the updated last week, of the 14,782 Texans infected with the HIV virus, 58 of them are between the age of 13 and 19 years old. Though the number appears low in comparison to the number infected with the HIV virus, that number is the result of a large number of students not being informed about the AIDS virus in schools and not taking the time to find out about the virus on their own.

Such statements as the ones made above by a sophomore student at the high school show students are not being educated about the deadly disease and how to protect themselves from contracting it. School officials and students may have the right to feel sorry or dejected about the reports of AIDS on their school campus.

But they should not be devastated nor shocked, because it was bound to occur with the lack of knowledge about the disease in today's classrooms.



Legacies of life

Death of teacher spurs examination of what we leave to others

A great woman died recently. You didn't know her. She was a teacher, a lady, a woman of excellence, and her passing leaves this world with a little less grace.

This was the first death in my life that I have ever truly mourned. My first reaction was to utterly scoff at life's everyday duties. Never in my life had the necessities of studying for a quiz or reporting to work seemed so contemptible.

This is what my life is about, I thought. Filling out W-2 forms and taking out the garbage is life? How am I going to leave even a small legacy with so much meaningless drivel to eat up my days?



Toni Garrard

It took a while to come to grips with her death, and during this time I was compelled to rediscover for myself what the meaning of life was. So battered an intellectual pursuit is this personal quest, that I almost do not mention it. What compels me, however, is the realization that the meaning of life must be different for every man and woman who ever walks this world.

For each of us, there are three things that can happen in our search for personal meaning. One, we never try hard enough to truly find that meaning. Two, what we find is too daunting and a substitution is made in the form of money, power, relationships or prestige. Three, meaning is found, and one must pursue it to our success or failure.

Very few of us settle for not at least declaring some sort of purpose, and in fact it may be that the substitution route is most traveled. It would be easy to assume that life is one big

race, and those who have the most money or conquests when they die are the winner. We all want to live well and build powerful careers. These things have a place in a modern world. To make them a reason to live, however, is a tragedy to ourselves and to mankind.

Given, it is no easy thing to live by such lofty ideals when reality is so demanding. In its essence life does not lend itself to the pursuit of greatness or the creation of legacies. The average day is a struggle to meet the demands of living. Bills must be paid, meetings attended, chapters read, dishes washed, papers written. Our nature, our performance throughout these, life's everdays, is what will determine our excellence or mediocrity.

The individual legacies are often made in life's reprieves. By this, I mean the moment in an average day when one's actions shine or those days of refuge when the real world is suspended and something special is accomplished.

I was 5 years old and sitting with my family when our waitress — the most beautiful girl I had ever seen — came over to take our order. Afterwards, she smiled at me and said, "I just can't get over how much I looked like you when I was that age. It's like looking at a picture of myself."

I don't remember what else she said. I do remember that she was friendly and sincere, and for some reason I struck a personal chord in her, and she chose to share it with me. She probably forgot me the next day. Fifteen years later, I still remember her. I wanted to be just like her. That, however small, is a legacy that she left.

How many times might we have done the same thing for someone? Then again, how many times have we

let yesterday's problems destroy today's opportunities? I know I have done just that too many times.

You see, death absolutely ends every opportunity we have of contributing to this world, and our life will have been meaningless if we have not given something positive to our posterity. Don't be misled into believing that you have left nothing if the general population is ignorant of it. Too often we get caught up in how big or how acknowledged our contributions need to be to really matter.

Tolstoy's "War and Peace" will doubtless remain on the library shelves for more years than it has pages. His literary work is probably also of more value than a princess-like waitress making a little girl feel wonderful. But, who is to say that his life, by the renown of his accomplishments, was at its end worth any more than a man or woman who quietly spent their life giving to others.

It is essential, absolutely essential, that we are kind to one another in this life. What we make and take are meaningless. It is what we give of ourselves that determines the quality of our humanity.

This command towards generosity and kindness is not an easy one. We humans, it seems, are essentially self-serving in nature. The best way to continually conduct ourselves in a manner that is given to excellence is to believe in something. More than this, we must believe in something worth a lifetime of devotion.

What is that belief for you? Or have you even decided?

A great woman died recently. She had faith in what she believed, and as a result, she spent her life giving of herself to others.

When you die, will someone be able to say as much of you?

Garrard is a sophomore speech communications major

Late awareness

Bush ignored environmental warnings

In one of his boldest moves yet, President Bush last week threw his support behind a plan which will phase out ozone-destroying chlorofluorocarbons by 1995. And it came only one week before the New Hampshire primary.

It's about time! Scientists have only been screaming about the ozone problem for the past decade.

Meanwhile, Bush and his predecessor Ronald Reagan have dragged their feet, demanding more evidence before taking any actions.

For years, the European countries, as well as Japan, have been pressuring the United States to sign a United Nations treaty which would place limits on greenhouse gas admissions. But the United States has always come up with some excuse for avoiding the issue.

The Montreal Protocol which the United States and other industrialized-countries signed calls only for a total

phase out of harmful emissions by 2000. Bush's plan goes one better. He plans to cut emissions five years earlier.

Of course, Bush's new proposal has a lot to do with the fact that this is an election year and he currently faces stiff opposition from challengers.

Bush's popularity is at its lowest since he took office.

He has failed to convince voters of his competence in areas such as the faltering economy and foreign trade, so he is trying to find some new issue with which he can boost his campaign.

His "god-squad," a committee that routinely decides which species will live or die, has been less than fair with the environment.

The self-proclaimed environmental president is anything but.

While Bush's proposal deserves merit, his motives can only be seen as good public relations.



Mail Call

Minorities need scholarships, aid

This letter is written in response to an article by Jon DeShazo on the topic of minority money. Mr. DeShazo made the statement that the impediments to attending college no longer lie in racial but instead in economic barriers. Such an empty and ignorant statement cannot be overlooked. DeShazo, who do you think are the poor? Being poor and being a minority who has historically not been given an equal chance is not as easy, as you may think. Let us not be greedy Mr. DeShazo, because greed is not good. Instead, listen and understand, because there is something in it for you.

You have about as much to gain from those scholarships as the people they are given to. But don't just think of yourself and the short-term picture. Scrutinize, instead, the long-term and devastating side effects that would be present if minority scholarships did not exist. Consider this: By the year 2000, Hispanics will be the largest minority group with a population of approximately 30 million. They will comprise a large portion of the work force. Ask yourself what this country will be like if the status quo continues. Who would you rather have pay your social security, someone without any education working at a fast food restaurant or a doctor,

lawyer or accountant?

Consider also the fate of the nation if one-third to one-half of the population, which will comprise all minorities, is not functioning in an academic capacity. Our faltering economy should be more of reason to focus on opportunity for the masses. Therefore, Mr. DeShazo, I ask not for your frustration, but rather for your cooperation, because no matter which way you look at it we're in this together. The future of this nation is very dependent on the fate of all minorities. As a result, this country can no longer afford to put minorities to the side and hope that everything will be better.

Given the opportunity, Hispanics, blacks, American Indians and women have much to offer to our wonderful country. With an education and equal chance at an opportunity, we will be able to design buildings instead of having to build them. We will also be able to innovate products instead of having to assemble them. No longer will we be looked upon as a source of cheap labor, but of a source of more labor. To this day I look forward.

In the mist of your attempt to understand our dilemma, don't have the misconception that all minorities are dispirited and do not want or are trying to help themselves. The latter is far from the truth. The fruits of an education are just beginning to ripen and the dusty doors of equality that you would perhaps call 'unfair' are just beginning to open. And yes we are walking in.

No, we are running in. We are running in to get out of decades of unfairness.

*Luis Vega
Class of '93*

Traditions take work, patience

On Feb. 7 as I was waited for my girlfriend up at the MSC, the artillery drum major of the Fighting Texas Aggie Band Steven Beller walked by carrying a piece of paper. Suddenly, a gust of wind picked the paper up from out of his hands and blew it into the memorial center lawn. To his chagrin, the paper landed in the exact place where it could not be reached without stepping in the grass.

After about 15 minutes for waiting for the wind to blow the paper towards him, two of his friends came by. The girl, from t.u., volunteered to get it for him since she doesn't go to school here. He wouldn't let her and made his point by informing her that no one is supposed to walk on the grass. Realizing that the wind wasn't going to move it any closer, he decided to go inside to find something that would reach the alienated paper.

At this point of frustration he turned to me and asked, "Am I taking this too far?!"

As soon as his friends had returned with the broom I looked through my car and found a coat hanger. After stretching the coat hanger, we managed to attach it to the broom and tried once more to get the piece of paper. Unfortunately, our efforts failed. I left to park my car in 30-minute parking in order to avoid a dreaded parking ticket. On the way back I found another hanger that we tied to the contraption. So, here it was, a broom, two coat hangers, and a shoe all tied together, looking much like a fishing rod. It worked!!

Keeping traditions alive sometimes takes a lot of team effort and patience. Whoop!

*Kevin Graham
Class of '93*

Have an opinion? Express it!

The Battalion is interested in hearing from its readers. All letters are welcome. Letters must be signed and must include classification, address and a daytime phone number for verification purposes. They should be 250 words or less. Anonymous letters will not be published. The Battalion reserves the right to edit all letters for length, style and accuracy. There is no guarantee the letters will appear. Letters may be brought to 013 Reed McDonald, sent to Campus Mail Stop 1111 or can be faxed to 845-5408.