

The Battalion Editorial Board

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Bonfire

Could A&M have chosen a better spot for the event?

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MICHAEL SULLIVAN

CON



Jason Loughman

In the wake of Wednesday's announcement of the relocation of Aggie Bonfire to the polo fields, there is sure to be angry dissent and disagreement. All

too often, when confronted by the prospect of change, especially change in that which has become routine and familiar, people reject the new and desperately cling to the old.

In the case of the bonfire move, such knee-jerk reaction is especially baseless. The new site actually confers several important advantages to those who enjoy building, burning or watching this time-honored symbol of our "burning desire to beat the hell outta t.u."

First of all, this move alleviates concerns about the possibility of burning embers from the stack igniting nearby buildings. At the polo fields, there are no nearby buildings. The closest structure to the new location is four times as far away as previously, at Duncan Field. Perhaps more importantly in this regard, there are no residential areas in close proximity to the polo field. Homeowners who no longer have to water their roofs in anticipation of hot sparks blowing their way may leave the ranks of those who harbor antipathy towards this valued tradition.

Additionally, even students most involved in the construction of bonfire agree that the new area will be more accessible for the trucks, tractors, cranes and other heavy equipment used in building bonfire.

Those in the Corps who may miss the convenience of walking right out the back of the quad to Duncan Field will find ample room in one of the parking areas adjacent to the new location, as will dorm students from northside, should they wish to drive. The polo field location will also offer increased accessibility to students and visitors on bonfire night.

The west campus location is not an acceptable solution for several reasons. There does not appear to be the same accessibility in terms of either entrances, roads, or parking that the polo fields offer. A west campus bonfire would also be somewhat hidden, secreted away beyond the railroad tracks. We must remember that bonfire is not only a school event, but is also a community event. The progress of the stack, growing upward and outward in the weeks leading up to the end of November, is an exciting thing to see. If Bryan-College Station residents can see that as they drive by the school, they may share in that excitement. Finally, locating bonfire too far in the back of west campus moves it outside of reasonable walking distance for all but the most hard-core students. This would make it even more difficult to motivate students to come out and "build the hell outta bonfire."

Those of us who support the Fightin' Texas Aggie Bonfire can all agree on one thing for sure. It will burn in a new place, but at least it will still burn. Keep in mind that there are those who would prefer that it was not so.

Sullivan is a senior English major

Loughman is a senior journalism major

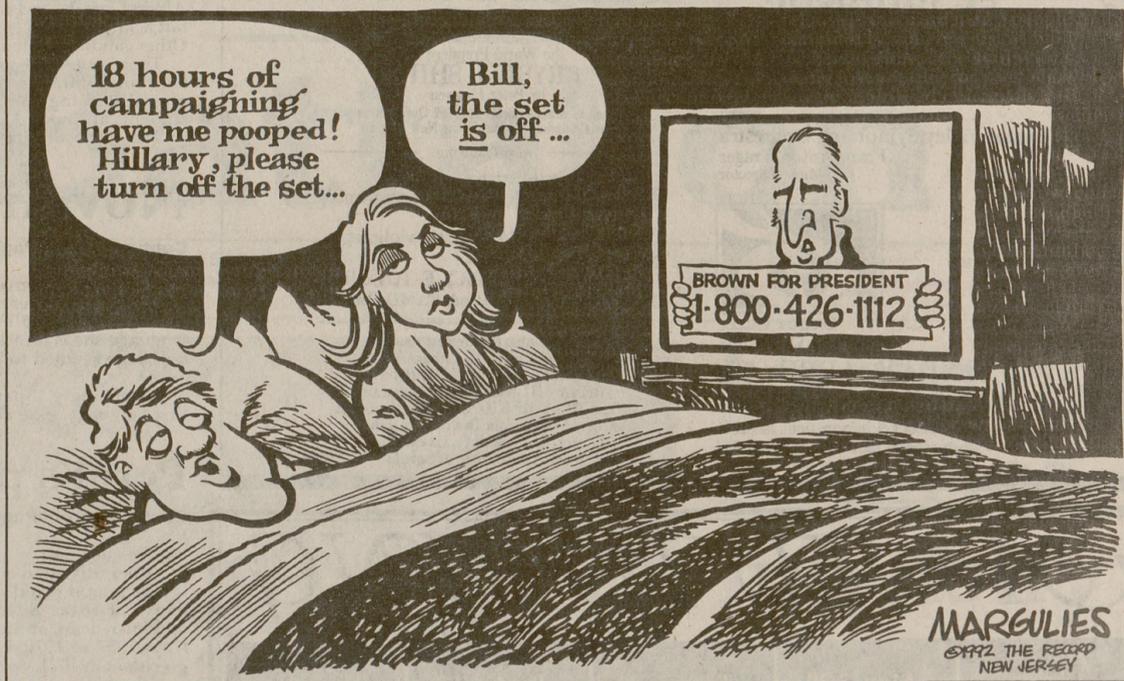
Have an opinion? Express it.

The Battalion is interested in hearing from its readers. All letters to the editor are welcome.

Letters must be signed and must include classification, address and a 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 that letters will appear.

Letters may be brought to 013 Reed McDonald, sent to Campus Mail Stop 1111 or can be faxed to 845-2647.



A weekend to remember

Getaway offers new perspectives on sharing with others

Weekends come and go, often blending together in our memories as time goes by. Occasionally, however, there comes to mind weekends which are different from all others. For me, this past weekend possessed the necessary characteristics to be emotionally worthwhile for the long term category of my memory.

This weekend I had one of the best weekends of my entire life. There was nothing particularly exciting about it. I didn't go dancing. I wasn't entertained at an exclusive club. And I didn't dine at one of the area's most elegant restaurants. What I did do was spend the weekend at my Lambda Sigma retreat in the very nearby town of Wellborn, Texas.

The accommodations consisted of merely an old, isolated plot of land with an outdoor pavilion and a very rustic meeting room marked by hardwood floors which became especially cold with the lack of central heating. There were indoor bathrooms, but they were not complete with light fixtures. I could go on. This picture is hardly what most people would pick for an exotic week-end getaway, but it is one bursting with personal meaning, for it was under these conditions that I rediscovered a very important lesson in life: share and celebrate life.

At the beginning of the retreat, I, along with others, was guilty of noticing the negative aspects of our situation. I wasn't sure if I could have

fun since I didn't know a single person in the organization. It was also just my luck that it happened to be raining a tremendous amount (even for College Station), so outdoor activities were out of the question. None among us had any high-tech stereo equipment, a T.V. game entertainment system to play, or even a television with clear reception, but collectively we still had one of the most valuable pieces of equipment in the whole world: we had our deep down inborn abilities to reach out to others and share the experience of being a human.

Human beings have an exceptional capacity to relate to each other and impact other's lives. Unfortunately, we often forget this and end up spending too much of our time doing time-consuming odd jobs that really do not matter in the overall scheme of things. For example, I constantly find myself caught in a rut where I am so worried about finishing every item on my daily "to do list" that I forget to take time out to enjoy the things around me. On Saturday, I realized that I should spend more hours of the week communicating with people.

Just simply conversing with other humans offers many exciting gifts all wrapped into one package. It allows us to absorb more information about what is going on in the world, and what different people think about these happenings. On a deeper level, it enables us to meet our human need for companionship and personal relationships. Overall, it grants us a fuller life.

There are many less-fortunate people who would simply love to share their gifts with even one person if they only had the chance. For example, I remember the last time I visited my grandfather in Florida. Here is a man with many old-age

dilemmas, who cannot do very much physically, and whose life surely is not exciting by college students' standards. But he is also a man bubbling with intense emotions and nearly a century of real life experiences to share with mankind. Unfortunately, people like my grandfather have extraordinary gifts which go unclaimed by humanity. Although we as students do not always have many chances to visit our relatives, there are many people in the community who are just as willing to exchange gifts of the soul with us, many just waiting for us to show that we are interested or actually care.

Around this time of the year, there are many worthwhile fund-raisers or community service events which are excellent occasions in which to encounter some of these people. Upcoming events in April include the community-wide Big Event, the Special Olympics and Dance for Heart. These and others are all good opportunities for us as students to help out those who may be lacking in certain areas. They are also chances for us to learn and experience what other human beings have to offer once we get past the surface level.

If you're not already active in a club or organization which is taking part in one of these activities, get involved with a couple of friends or sign up individually. Whatever you do, do not miss out on your daily opportunity to enrich your life and the lives of others. For that is what life really is all about. It's about celebrating and sharing the experiences we have as human beings. This is what my weekend taught me.

Saddler is a sophomore psychology major

Violence against homosexuals confounds reader

Most everyone has an opinion on homosexuality. "It's wrong. It's right. It's ok, just not for me." But how many of us take the time to make an informed decision? How many gays or lesbians do you know?

As a speech communication graduate student, I took advantage of a class assignment to immerse myself in the lesbian/gay culture in Bryan/College Station. What I found were individuals just like you and me - trying to get a degree, worried about getting a job, and wanting to go out and have a good time. But I also discovered that lesbian and gay people also face some unique challenges.

For most students, going away to college means freedom from parents and restrictions. It is a time to get in touch with different parts of oneself. For many gays and lesbians, it means fully accepting their homosexuality. That brings on many challenges. One must tell friends and family members. This coming out process can be painful.

Jeff expressed fears of telling his family about being gay at a Gay and Lesbian Student Services meeting in the fall:

"I've told my roommate and my brother (I'm gay)," Jeff said. "I have to tell my Mom. I don't know how she'll

react - she's very religious. Telling Mom will be the hardest part. When I told my brother, he left the house for two days. We had no idea where he went. I needed support from someone. He didn't give me that. He's having to work through it."

During the time of turmoil, Gay and Lesbian Student Services members provide support for one another. They form a "family" while the natural family is adjusting. Most family members come to accept the fact that their relative is lesbian or gay and often their relationship is closer than before.

One aspect of being lesbian or gay that scared and amazed me was the almost constant fear homosexuals live under. Gaybashing is violence of any sort against gays and lesbians. This was the topic of one GLSS meeting last semester.

Brian Reinhardt, GLSS president, introduced the evening's topic by saying, "All of us in this room have been victims of harassment by the gay bashing on our GAYLINE." One of the messages left on the answering machine was a death threat. "Even in this community there is a lot of hatred and gay bashing on the verbal level."

Reinhardt introduced the evening's guest speaker, Mark, who had been

beaten severely in Denver earlier in the year. Mark described the incident. "The man to my right grabbed me by the throat. The other man grabbed a two-by-four. The first blow came across my face. I don't remember most of it. It smashed my nose. I had stitches in my face and concussion. I was black and blue from the waist up."

"I want people to realize this does happen. I've been in dark alleys from Houston to New York and not thought about it," Mark said. "I've lived through it, and I'm here to let you know it is still going on."

Gaybashing affects the lives of local lesbians and gays as well. Last summer early in July, Paul Broussard, a 1985 graduate of Texas A&M, was stabbed to death in Houston just because a group of teenagers thought he was gay.

These stories and many others of actual violence amaze me because of the level of hatred they reveal.

Why would a person take such deliberate steps to harm another over such a private matter as sexuality?

Sinclair James is a speech communications graduate student