

## EDITORIAL

### Raising our aim

#### Education needs higher standards

To understand the growing importance of an education in our society, consider that the median family income of people without a high school diploma plummeted 25 percent between 1973 and 1989. Keeping students in school and increasing standards — increasing quality — is no longer an option; it is an imperative.

The State Board of Education is sticking to plans to increase the passing standard of the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS) exam from 60 percent to 70 percent. Successful completion of the TAAS exam is required in order to graduate from high school in Texas. While this change demands more out of students, the only caveat would be that teaching general knowledge would devolve into teaching that

knowledge required to pass the TAAS exam.

While nearly one-third of students failed the 70 percent standard administered to juniors in spring 1991, this is no argument for lower standards. Some 84 percent of the students that failed the exam the first round came back to pass the exam in subsequent attempts. Higher standards force students to learn and earn a diploma instead of shoveling them through classrooms and out onto the street without even a basic understanding of grammar or math. Lastly, higher standards help indicate weak links in the system which urge greater attention from educators. As we enter the 21st century, we require quality education. The new TAAS standards are a vital step in the right direction.

## MAIL CALL

### Racist party theme was despicable

To Michael A. Hebert, President of Sigma Alpha Epsilon:

Your response to the letter from Joe Salem only strengthens the accusation that you involve yourself in racist activities.

Because you neither deny nor apologize for any actions that occurred at your "Jungle Party," you are delivering the message that you condone these actions. You are therefore a racist, Mike.

As I understand it, your pledges were dressed in black-face and grass skirts and chased around the room as if they were being hunted.

The fact that your fraternity participates in many valid on and off campus activities does not make this act less racist.

The fact that people were dressed in a variety of other costumes at your party does not make this act less racist. No other facts concerning your chapter or the fraternity system as a whole make this act less racist.

You are a racist, Mike. Because racist actions were occurring at your party and you either failed to recognize them or failed to acknowledge them, you are a racist.

I hope for the sake of the Texas A&M Greek System that you are not representative of the whole.

Steven A. Helms  
Class of '92

This letter is in response to the alleged activities that occurred at the Sigma Alpha Epsilon party on Oct. 2.

Joe Salem, a member of the band, Love Squad, depicted some racist activities that he feels took place at this party.

If what Salem said is true, I want to thank him for exposing Sigma Alpha Epsilon fraternity for the insensitive and racist organization that it is.

Granted, people have the right to do whatever they feel in the privacy of their own homes (or frat houses).

However, if the members of this organization who participated in these activities truly hold such racist views, then I ask, as a friend of mine stated, that you wear your sheets in public so we as black people on campus know how you feel and where we stand with you.

Karmen G. Moss  
Sombra Davis  
Class of '93

### Student shocked at religious intolerance

I would like to salute Dr. Presley for his courageous and generous offer. I share views similar to those of Dr. Presley and it is truly wonderful to hear that there are others like myself here at TAMU who feel the same about life. Over the course of my life, I have come to see that I am ultimately responsible for the quality and value given to my life; I do not believe in any cosmic forces such as destiny, fate or even God. I am not ashamed of these beliefs and would be more than happy to defend them or explain them; I would like to thank Dr. Presley for what would appear to be an invitation to do just that.

Secondly, I would like to express my shock at the letter I have just read by Casey Evans in Friday's Battalion. The spirit of the Inquisition seems to be alive and well, even today in America. How can anyone say that there is only one path to follow in life? What makes the teaching of Christ any more (or less) valid than those of Mohammed, Buddha, Krishna, or any of the other great religions of the world? I would even go so far to say that very few Christians have even read other sacred texts, yet they seem to have no trouble condemning those who would be so inclined.

This attitude of intolerance is what made me leave the Catholic faith two years ago and I see the same problem in

Stephanie Williams  
Class of '94

## Stopping crimes against children

### We must all do our part to prevent this barbarism

Several days ago I turned from my work and glanced at the television seeking a temporary brain asylum. There she was, Sally Struthers, strolling among children with distended bellies and finger-sized legs pleading for aid. "Send money." "Please help."

We've all seen this woman in countless commercials and print ads over the years. This time, as most, I turned back to work not wanting to see those misshapen little bodies. There just seems to be so much bad in the world and so little one can do about it.

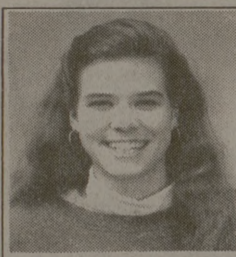
I volunteered once at a home for children who had been sexually and physically abused. These children were of many ages and races. Their one connection was that someone — a parent, a sibling, a friend, a teacher, a stranger — someone had beaten and/or sexually assaulted each one.

No doubt, you've heard this type of story before. Perhaps you've heard this story many times, and it really doesn't shock you anymore. After all, what can you do?

One afternoon, I sat around the table with a few of these children. We were cutting fish out of butcher paper for them to hang on their walls. One of the young boys and I paired off to create a great and hideous shark. He was laughing. Everyone was happy. Who could guess these children's histories?

An older worker told my little friend that he was about to go to the doctor, but he wouldn't get any shots. Maybe it was leaving the protection of the house; maybe it reminded him of something else, but this slight boy flew into a rage the likes of which I have never seen. "No! No!" he yelled over and over and climbed into a narrow space between the bathtub and wall where he stayed and screamed. I found out later that his mother had used him in Satanistic rituals.

An ex-Catholic priest has acknowledged to sexually abusing dozens of children over a period of at least a



TONI GARRARD  
Columnist

decade. Police in Martensville, a small town in Canada, have filed 143 charges against nine residents for the sexual abuse of at least 30 children at a day care center. A 28-year-old teacher at a Bronx elementary school was arrested this summer for allegedly molesting at least three of the girls in his third-grade class.

These are just a few of the shamefully high number of cases that we know about as a society. Who can dare to even hazard a guess as to how many incidents we don't know of? How many of the children that we see every day have someone beating or sexually violating them? Would it be accurate to say we don't really want to know?

The French novelist, Camus once said, "Perhaps we cannot prevent the world from being a world in which children are tortured. But we can reduce the number of tortured children. And if you believers don't help us, who else in the world can help us do this?"

It is a fact that a great many of the child-abusers started out as abused children. So the catch is that the best way to decrease the number of offenders is to decrease the number of victims. Seems almost impossible.

To start with, let's get the judicial system to show a little more intestinal fortitude. Sexual offenders are being allowed to plea bargain for lesser charges or receive suspended sentences.

Let's require school nurses who see all district children at least once a year to ask directly, as a matter of procedure, whether the child has been abused or not. Whatever the answers, something more can be done that is being done.

I once expressed to a very wise woman that I couldn't understand a world that allowed children to be hurt. She paused and then told me a story. At the height of a devastating famine, a young Irishman cried out in despair to his priest, "Why, Father, doesn't God send someone to help the people?" The older man simply replied, "Why, He has. He sent you."

There are many evils in this world, and we cannot hope to end them all, but we can do something. Find that something with me, and be one of the believers.

Garrard is a junior speech communications major



many other denominations as well. Dr. Presley did not attack Christianity, but to some Christians it seems as if someone with non-Christian beliefs is automatically "Anti-Christian" by definition. I am sorry your intolerance blinds you. I see many ways that such an attitude is no more noble or logical than racism. To all the Christians out there, I wish you a happy and rich life; please do not think bad of mine simply because Jesus is not a part of it.

Dan Alexander  
Class of '94

### Sheriff Miller didn't do anything wrong

This letter is a response to the letter printed in last week's Mail Call condemning Sheriff Ron Miller for having a "criminal" record. Here follow the facts about the incident.

Under state law, the facility in question was not an "illegal gambling shack." It met the criteria for a legal operation: It was a private residence, the owner made no profit, and everybody had a fair and equal chance of winning.

The house is frequented by law enforcement officials, as well as elected county and city officials.

On the evening in question, there were 30 or 40 people present. Sheriff Miller was the only person summoned to appear to answer charges. He was not arrested.

The sheriff was charged with a class C misdemeanor (the equivalent of a traffic ticket), which carries a maximum \$200 fine.

Sheriff Miller was not allowed to call

any witnesses at his trial because the district attorney and the judge did not want to drag names through the mud, except for Ron Miller's. This forced the jury into a guilty verdict. The fine, however, was only \$1.

Rather than pay the fine and admit guilt, Sheriff Miller appealed to county court for a new trial. He was finally granted a new trial, but it is not scheduled until after the election.

All total, Sheriff Ron Miller has spent close to \$25,000 to fight a guilty verdict. Politically speaking, it would have been much better for Sheriff Miller to pay the fine and let the issue rest. However, Sheriff Miller and his supporters know he is innocent. Why pay the fine if he is not guilty?

The author of the letter is curious as to why there is so much support for Ron Miller. The answer is simple. The sheriff has impressed the people of the Brazos Valley with the job he has done and they want four more years of his leadership and service.

Chris Tarrillion '94  
accompanied by 5 signatures

### Shouldn't judge a book by its cover

As I was walking to class a few mornings ago, my thoughts were interrupted by some girl I have never seen or met before saying "I have a pet peeve to share with you, new waver person." For four and a half years I have been telling all my non-Aggie friends what a nice place Texas A&M is to go to school and how friendly everyone acts toward one another. I left out all the rude, closed-minded people who

make unnecessary comments or uncalled for actions toward me or my friends.

In my years at A&M my friends and I have been verbally accosted many times by people who think they need to tell us what horrible people we are because of our manner of dress, our haircuts, or because the type of shoes we are wearing do not particularly "go with" the outfits we are wearing. I have in the past, been accused of being a devil worshiper, had my sexuality questioned, and had innumerable rude comments told to my face by people who I was trying to say howdy to. Usually I'm polite and try to explain that just because my hair is short or bright red does not mean that I am doomed to hell or that I am a crazed ax-wielding maniac out to destroy A&M's traditions.

Just because I do not look like the typical Ag, do not assume anything about me because of stereotypes.

In general, most of the people I have met at A&M are extremely friendly, but to the people to whom I am referring, remember, if you can't say anything nice, don't say anything at all.

Hannah Bailey  
Class of '92

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