

EDITORIALS

Misplaced priorities Drug war efforts badly directed

The Drug Enforcement Agency's recent brainchild, Operation Red River, seeks to attack America's marijuana problem with commando-like raids headed by DEA agents and supported by specially trained National Guard Units.

Recent raids conducted in Oklahoma and Texas resulted in the confiscation of over 39,000 marijuana plants.

Similar raids in Kentucky destroyed more than 800,000 plants — some of which were 25 feet tall.

While applauding anti-drug efforts of the DEA-National Guard units, we question the funneling of time, energy and manpower into raiding marijuana fields when drug lords and street gangs continue to terrorize city streets with crack cocaine and similar, more deadly drugs.

The cold, hard truth is that more deadly drugs than marijuana can still be found on every street corner.

When a significant number of inner-city youth know the exact amount of crack cocaine necessary to induce a miscarriage, efforts at combating marijuana — a relatively harmless substance — reveal a set of slightly misplaced priorities.

The highly publicized marijuana raids appear to be a bit of DEA grandstanding at a time when local police forces call for increased personnel support in the fight against crack cocaine.

Burning marijuana fields is a step in the right direction, but it won't stop drugs from killing our children, draining our economy and threatening the very fabric of our nation.

The manpower and money directed at curbing the cultivation of marijuana should be channeled into more DEA operations focused on crack cocaine and the other more deadly narcotics circulating on city streets.

Forgive, forget, donate United Way worth our trust

After hearing of the extravagant perks accorded top executives at the United Way, some donors who once gladly contributed to the non-profit organization now express their reluctance to continue giving.

Instead of helping the homeless or feeding the hungry, would-be givers envisioned their United Way donations buying executive tickets for the next flight to London on the Concorde.

The United Way of Brazos County expressed those same concerns and blocked all area contributions from progressing to the United Way of America, the parent organization where the mismanagement was discovered. Subsequently, the United Way of America scrambled to mend its ways as more and more local branches withheld their dues.

The chapter dues withheld amount to one percent of donations given to the United Way at the community level. The remaining 99 percent of United Way donations remain in the community where they were given.

The national organization, how-

ever, implemented many changes to ensure that such abuse of donated funds can never happen again.

The director of the Peace Corps replaced the former president of the United Way, and the president's salary will be reduced. The national staff of 265 members has been reduced to 185 in order to streamline and reduce excess. The operating budget for management, which was \$29 million, has been reduced to nearly half that amount.

Such changes have proven so effective that the United Way of Brazos County has decided to resume dues payments. The one percent dues payment helps the United Way secure national advertising, the costs of which exceed the budgets of local chapters. The remaining 99 percent continues to aid local United Way chapters which continue to serve communities and which continue to deserve the donations of charitable individuals, despite past indiscretions of the national office.

Giving to the United Way is not a luxury, but a necessity.

Gay-bashing won't happen here Aggies will respect most basic of all humans' rights

It has been another one of those days. I logged onto the computer net to catch up on some world news and was frightened to read about the intense rise in anti-gay violence in Oregon and Kentucky.

In a few days, the citizens of Oregon will be voting on Proposition Nine, which will in effect strip homosexuals of any and all rights. They will have no grounds for legal recourse in instances of discrimination. Needless to say, numerous groups in the Oregon area have formed to fight the passage of the bill. This means a rise in gay and lesbian "visibility".

Sadly, this also means a rise in hate crimes. This rise peaked when four avowed skinheads lobbed a Molotov cocktail through a window of a house where several homosexuals were staying. One gay male and one lesbian were killed in the flames. Murdered.

Similar incidents have been occurring in Kentucky. The Kentucky Supreme Court recently ruled the state's anti-sodomy law, unconstitutional. Kentucky, now one of the 26 "free states," has seen a marked increase in hate crimes. One gay couple in Russellville had their ranch encircled by violent protesters who proceeded to hang and then burn dummies of them in effigy.

This senseless harassment stems from the ignorance and intolerance of people who are incapable of understanding diversity and its importance in a heterogeneous culture.

As I read about these events, George Michael's song, "Praying For Time" came on and I began to believe his words. "It's hard to love, there's so much to hate... there is no hope to speak of..." Then my fears turned homeward. This week is the Gay and Lesbian Student Services

Awareness Week. This means there will be an increase in gay and lesbian visibility. Will there also be an increase in local violence and harassment? I began to get quite worried.

But then my eternal hope kicked in and I realized that I have never felt any form of discrimination here at Texas A&M.

I discussed this with my boyfriend, telling him how all my family, all my friends, all my co-workers, and most of my professors know I'm gay. I even have a pink triangle on my car and occasionally wear my "Nobody Knows I'm Gay" T-shirt on campus.

Yet, aside from the open-mouthed stares and rare pointing finger (index, that is), I have never witnessed any discrimination. My boyfriend said that I was the exception, but I don't believe that. I won't believe that.

It is the spirit of human nature that is alive here at AggieLand that is exceptional.

Many people may not understand what homosexuality is all about and some people may even find it distasteful and disgusting, but the main difference is that, here in the Brazos Valley, I know that none of them would resort to violence.

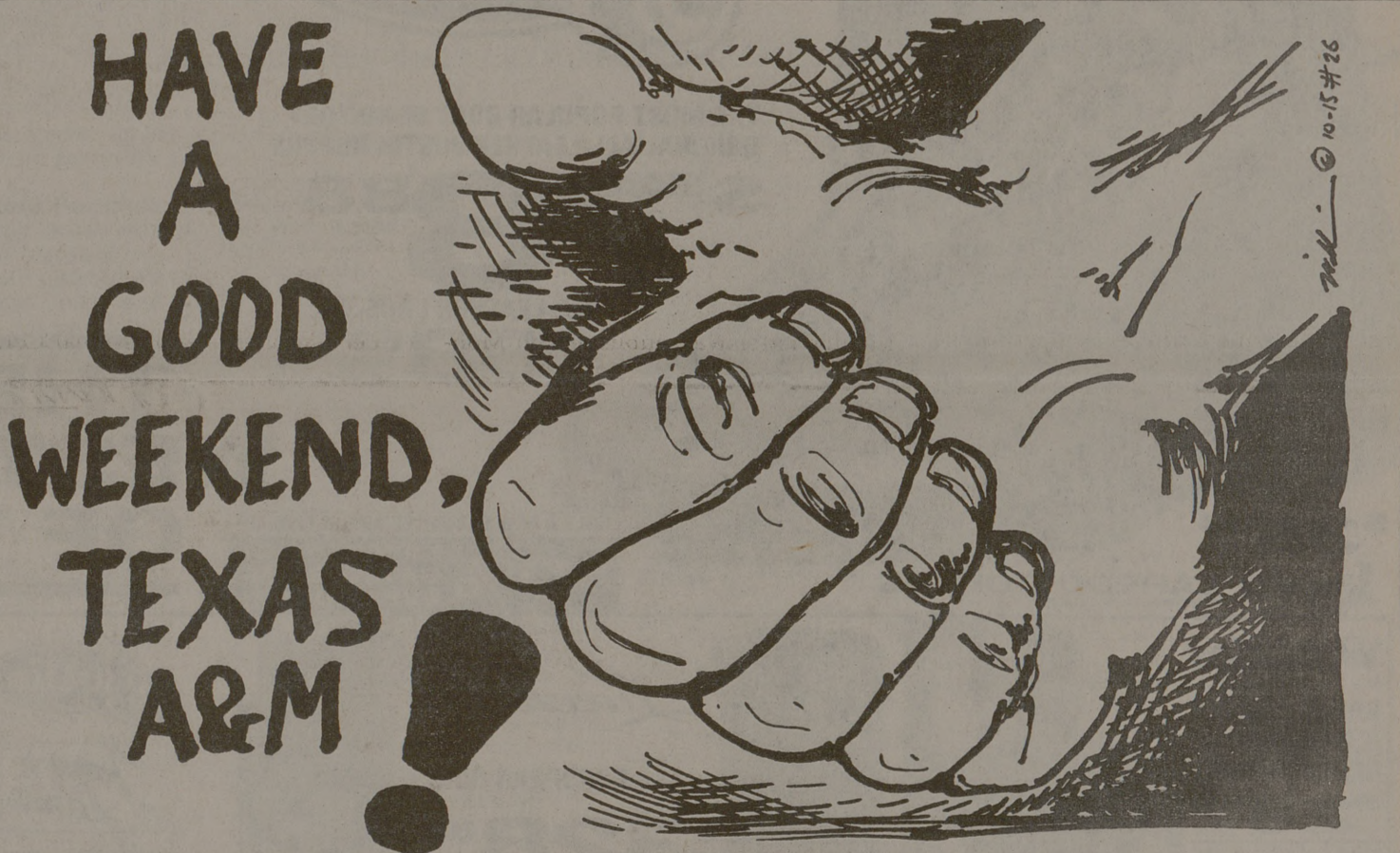
They may degrade themselves by illustrating their intolerance with childish, annoying phone calls, but they would never go so low as to physically harm somebody, much less kill a person.

I know that although my basic human nature may not be understood by everyone, those who don't understand will at least recognize my basic humanity and treat me with the same respect due to all humans, no matter what ethnicity, religion, age, sex, physical impairment, political belief, or sexual orientation.

Scroggs is a senior English and philosophy major

GUEST COLUMNIST

JOHN M. SCROGGS



MAIL CALL

Cartoon insensitive to disabled people

I am writing in response to the cartoon that appeared in the Battalion on Oct. 9, which satirized the budget expenses recently proposed by the leaders holding a basketful of what was implied to be wasteful expenses. Among those "wasteful" expenses was electric door openers.

I am physically challenged with a birth defect and I usually walk with crutches. I recently suffered a broken leg, and I am consequently using a wheelchair.

My recent experiences have caused me to appreciate the problems that a wheelchair-bound person faces, one of those being the problem of opening doors from a wheelchair. If the artist of the aforementioned cartoon were to use a wheelchair for any period of time, maybe he would also learn to appreciate this problem. I would ask that he be more sensitive to the needs of the handicapped in the future. I certainly do not consider making the campus more accessible to the physically challenged a wasteful budget expense.

Derek Veazey
Class of '94

'Victories' in Indian Wars not so great

This letter is in response to the column by Anthony Lobaido (Is it appropriate to celebrate Columbus Day as a holiday? Battalion, Oct. 12) concerning the mistreatment of Native Americans. Many Americans feel that apartheid is a very unjust system, but what has taken place in the United States is much worse. Over the past centuries Native Americans have had their land taken away, been systematically separated, and slowly but surely exterminated. The people that once ruled this land now make up less than one percent of the population.

We have all been brought up to believe that Columbus and many other "great" figures were so heroic. As we all know, the conquerors get to write history; therefore, we never hear about the massacres and other atrocities. As Lobaido stated, "The quadcentennial celebration was ushered in on the heels of the Wounded Knee victory." If Lobaido considers the murder of 180 unarmed men, women and children a victory, would he also think that the Holocaust of World War II were a great deed if the Nazis had been able to write history?

Jim Ballew
Class of '93

Bush also open to character questions

This letter is in response to the letter by Karl Krueger. First, it is important

not to take Clinton's stand on the Vietnam War out of perspective. A vast majority of the U.S. population were up-in-arms against the war. This does not make them traitors. They were merely expressing their dissatisfaction with their government's involvement in foreign affairs. Second, you mentioned that the Soviets were the ones supplying the North Vietnamese with many weapons that were killing U.S. soldiers. However, if you recall, it was partly with U.S. weapons (supplied by Bush) that Iraq was fighting us and other nations with. Many innocent people are also being killed with these weapons.

You were also quick to call Clinton a coward. Why won't President Bush take responsibility for his knowledge of the Iran-Contra Scandal? It is utterly ridiculous to think that neither the president nor the vice president had knowledge of the largest arms deal (turned scandal) under Reagan-Bush.

One final point. President Bush showed a lot of integrity in upholding his many promises, such as raising taxes.

Jerome Valadez
Class of '96

Some Aggies not so accepting of others

I would like to express my support for Tiffany McEachern, Class of '96 (AAAAAAAAYY), and my disgust regarding the fact that even in this time of "diversity acceptance" people are looked down upon for their clothing, hair, values, etc. This is a sad commentary on us Aggies, and the whole aura of "friendliness" on campus. I thought

that a university would be different than my high school, where the closed-minded pigheads referred to me and my friends as "Nazis" for wearing Doc Martens, listening to punk, and upholding the Straight Edge way of life: no drugs, no alcohol, and no smoking.

I am not surprised about this incident. I guess the stereotypes I heard back home in New Jersey were right. Some of you Texans are too ignorant and intolerant for your own good. This is further shown to us through the parody of slave hunting at the Sigma Alpha Epsilon party.

Ignorance is no longer an excuse. It doesn't matter what color, creed, views, or sexual preferences one embraces — people are people. If you think you're better, you've got one coming, because the victims of your ignorance may just hit back.

Steve Chriss
Class of '96

Candidate Riggs an honorable person

"Aggies do not lie, cheat, or steal, nor do they tolerate those who do."

Bobby Riggs, Democratic candidate for sheriff of Brazos County, is a man who definitely lives both his personal and professional life by the Aggie Code of Honor. I know Bobby Riggs to be a man of the highest character with integrity that the citizens of Brazos County would be proud of. He is an exemplary law enforcement professional with the administrative, supervisory, and investigative experience that is critical for the job of sheriff.

I must remind Aggies who are Re-

publicans that in an election at the county level, the party affiliation of the candidate is irrelevant.

I am a Republican who will be voting for Bobby Riggs. It is a vote for the individual, not the party. I want to appeal to my Republican friends not to evaluate the candidates solely on a partisan basis.

Not only does Bobby Riggs have the credentials to be a great sheriff, the cold, hard fact is that Bobby Riggs is the only candidate running for sheriff of Brazos County who has not been indicted by a grand jury and convicted of a crime.

Randy Schaub
Class of '95

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The Battalion - Mail Call
013 Reed McDonald/Mail stop 1111
Texas A&M University
College Station, TX 77843