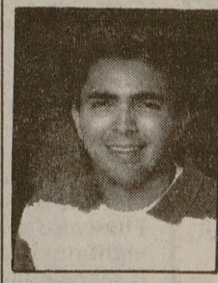


World without crime just a dream Even in this small town, worst is bound to happen



ROBERT VASQUEZ
Columnist

I have a dream. Like Martin Luther King, and probably every other human being, I have an ideal set in my mind that defines how this world should be.

There should be no crime. People should be able to walk outside at any time of the day or night and feel safe, free from fear of harm or danger. People should be able to leave the front door to their homes unlocked and not have to worry about strangers entering and violating their person, property or family.

Dream on. In one of the most recent and pathetic cases of crime, a family was gagged, tied and then burned, their house torched apparently in hopes of covering the crime. Friday night Houston firefighters found the bodies of a mother, father, their two daughters and a son-in-law, burned in their home.

What possible cause could someone have to commit such a crime? There was no evidence of robbery. Investigators can determine no motive. Friends and neighbors described the family as loving, wonderful, and charitable. If it could happen to them, neighbors said, it could happen to anyone.

Now the neighbors wonder what to do next. Security systems can do only so much. People thought that this normally quiet, tree-lined neighborhood was safe from such crime. One neighbor asked, "Where can you go where this won't happen?"

Maybe a small, affluent, college town? Surely one could escape the big city crime so prevalent in Houston by moving to a town like College Station, right?

Maybe not. Last Monday night an A&M student was stabbed in his side after two men attempted to rob him. The student was closing the door to his car when two unidentified men spun him around and demanded his money.

The student wasn't looking for a drug deal in a seedy neighborhood. He wasn't evading danger on a crime-

ridden street. He was visiting his girlfriend, who lives at an apartment complex where thousands of Aggie students live — and usually feel safe. He parked his car on a fairly busy street, where I often park my car — and used to feel safe.

I was talking to my roommate in my apartment when I saw flashing lights in the parking lot outside. Two police squad cars, an EMS ambulance and a fire truck filled the dark parking lot with flashing red and blue lights while the EMS treated the stab victim.

Other residents of my apartment complex gathered, discussing the times we parked in the same area and staggered (for various reasons) to our doors in the early hours of morning. We recalled stories of women raped in College Station in previous months and discussed what could be done to prevent future crimes. Like the neighbors in Houston, we expressed our failed hopes that it could never happen at our own doorstep.

Wake up. No one is immune to crime. Unlike justice, which has been known to avoid the wealthy, crime is no respecter of persons. Socialites have been assaulted in River Oaks. Network anchors have been attacked in Central Park. Blue chip investors have been raped in the New York Stock Exchange.

The fact is, everyone must be wary of crime in today's society.

It would be nice to pretend such crimes don't occur; to believe that they only happen to other people, in other neighborhoods. But everyone must take steps to protect themselves. Be aware of your surroundings when approaching or leaving your car, especially at night. Think about what you would do should something happen to you.

Maybe one day people will be able to enjoy a world free of crime. But for now, it's only a dream. Preparing for the worst can help make that dream come true for you. Falling victim, due to a lack of preparation, can be a rude awakening.

Vasquez is a senior journalism major



Aggie traditions are worthwhile despite what the cynics tell you

This is an open letter to all Aggies concerned with the recent assault on our traditions.

GUEST COLUMN

BRIAN BECKCOM

I urge Aggies who respect, participate in, and enjoy the varied traditions at A&M to ignore these misinformed, cynical critics.

When you roll around in the mud with a pig, you and the pig both get dirty, and besides, the pig likes it.

I don't mean to compare Ken Fontenot, author of "Tradition at A&M: a false name for blind adherence to status quo" in Friday's Battalion, and other anti-tradition Aggies to pigs. But it must be pointed out that most of their ideas are indeed slop.

To respond to letters like Ken Fontenot's is like saying that he may have a valid argument that justifies a response. Letters like his are merely uneducated drivel designed to tweak students who enjoy the traditions of Aggieland.

Don't fall victim to these traps! Ken Fontenot has no idea what education means. Education is not contained merely in the works of Plato and Alice Walker (is that politically correct or what?) but also comes from interacting with fellow students united toward a common goal.

The traditions at A&M foster loyalty, togetherness, and optimism, and these virtues, if applied intelligently, can lead to a positive post-educational experience.

Ken trivializes bonfire, states that it is an excuse to "sacrifice little trees" and engage in "disorderly drunkenness." Bonfire is about teamwork, about working together for a common cause.

If Ken doesn't share this cause, then by no means should he participate in bonfire.

But to criticize motivated, energetic

students for upholding a sacred tradition is a monumental injustice. According to Ken's logic, we should shun the teachings of Jesus, or Buddha, or Mohammed because we are just following a tradition of worship.

Fish Camp, Bonfire and the spirit of the Twelfth Man are all vulgarized by Ken in a personal diatribe against the University and her sacred traditions.

Ken's primary argument is that A&M stifles innovative ideas in an effort to maintain the status quo, yet Ken is practicing his own personal brand of fascism by insulting those students who, of their own volition, engage in A&M traditions.

Our national system of higher education is slowly redirecting its standards toward a moral and ethical relativism, all the while cheapening the educational experience.

A&M has plenty to offer to cynics, and I have absolutely no argument with them if they choose not to participate in University traditions.

Why does Ken have a problem with me participating in them? He feels that the reason A&M stands steadfastly by the traditions is because Aggies as a whole are insecure.

Talk about your derogatory stereotypes!

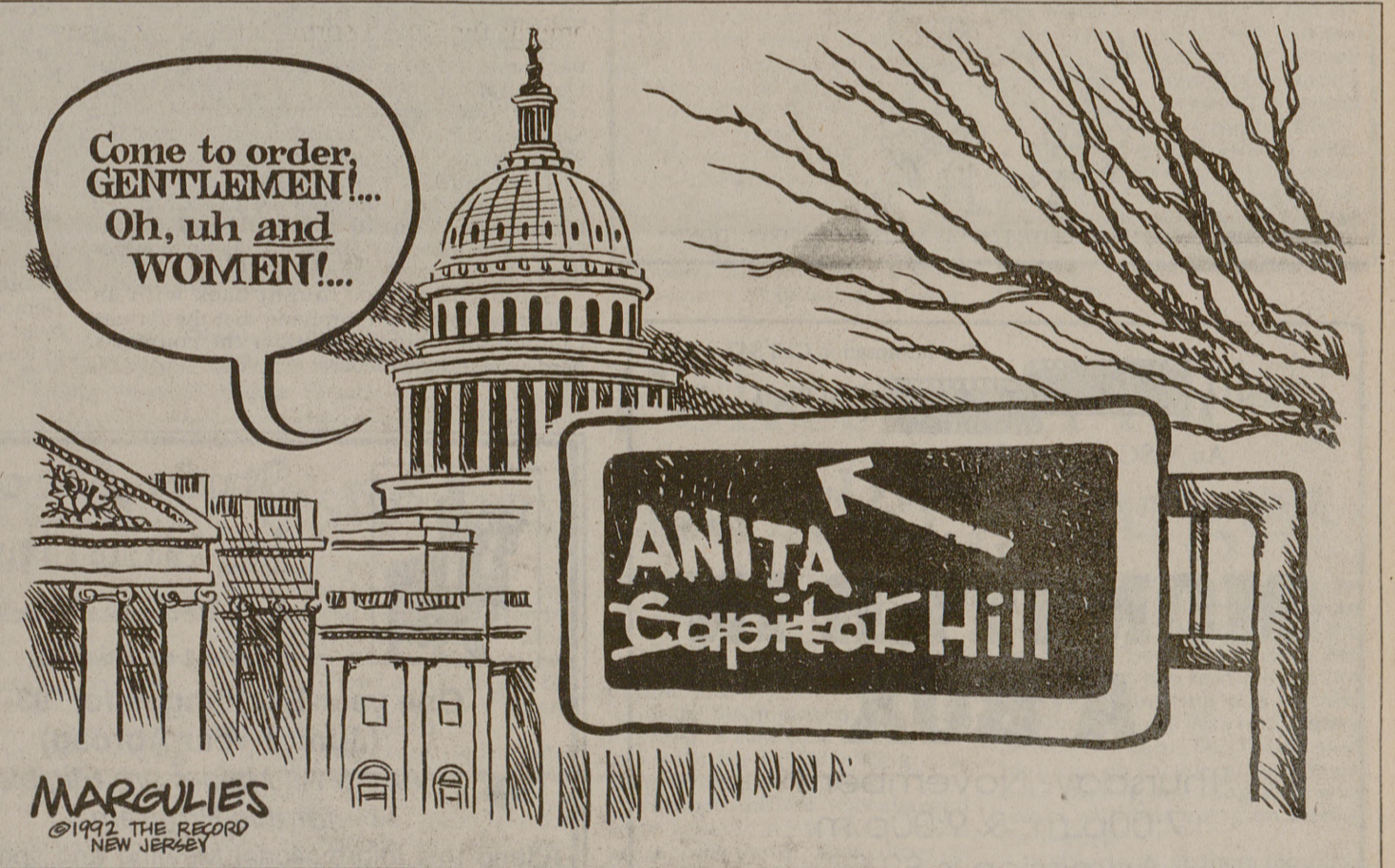
I would argue that it is Ken who is insecure, and that he has decided to vent his frustrations with the University by unleashing a vicious assault on the traditions here at Texas A&M.

Ken, Highway 6 does indeed run both ways, and if you don't like the traditions at A&M, I beg that you not take Highway 6.

I hope that you remain at A&M, and while 40,180 students — that's 98 percent of the student body, for you liberal arts majors — take part in all of the glorious traditions of Aggieland, I hope you continue to wallow in your cynicism and pessimism.

I'll be at bonfire and in Austin watching the fightin' Texas Aggies beat the hell out of t.u.

Beckcom is a computer science major



MAIL CALL

Supporting bonfire waste looks stupid

Texas A&M, as a state-supported academic institution, must provide leadership for dealing with global problems of deforestation, air pollution, and energy conservation. Concern for the environment on this campus is reflected by the presence of academic programs of several colleges in the general area of environmental science and other initiatives, such as the Texas Energy Extension Service. The University has recently initiated a campus-wide recycling program, and the use of recycled paper in at least some areas of the University. These efforts to "save a tree" represent a step toward leadership from an institution that has a fundamental responsibility in this area.

Efforts to recycle, conserve, and generally approach global environmental problems by one element of the campus community stand in sharp contrast with the much more conspicuous effort of another group — administrators, faculty, former students, and students — that dedicate their time during the fall

semester to either felling a local forest or supporting the effort. After a very active period of intense deforestation, the harvested trees are stacked and, with much drinking and merriment, doused with jet fuel and ignited. This event is planned for maximal media coverage, insuring that the real — or "traditional" — Texas A&M is properly portrayed around the state and nation. This annual example of pure stupidity and waste is guided by representatives of the Texas A&M administration, supported by the taxpayers, and conducted on state property. Consequently, environmental initiatives by one element of the campus community are not only negated by the other element, they are rendered farcical. The annual, mindless burning of a forest on this campus, coupled with the presence of academic programs and other initiatives that produce an image of concern for environmental problems at A&M, produces a perspective on this institution — from the outside — that is defined by a single descriptive term: hypocrisy.

Hugh Wilson
Professor of Biology

MSC doesn't stand for mausoleum either

This letter is in response to Matt Michaels' condemnation of the clothing sale the Class of '95 is holding in the MSC. Matt, do you know what the last two letters in MSC stand for? Student center, dedicated to the memory of Ag-

gies who died. Sure, you will never buy clothes in a cemetery, but nor will you check your mail, buy stamps, buy textbooks, buy scan-trons, eat, appreciate art, listen to the piano, relax, or study in a cemetery either. So wake up and stop complaining!

And by the way, Matt, you should learn this quote; it might do you some good: "It's better to be quiet and look stupid than to open your mouth and prove it."

Eric R. Wylie
Class of '93

A new solution for parking ticket bills

Parking, Traffic and Transit Services, your troubles are over! No more cruel jokes about your underhanded way of "taking care of business." No more irate students, faculty, or staff in your face. No more hassles involving the labor of passing out those discreet yellow tickets. And, finally, no more late nights trying to decide whom to bill for somebody else's tickets.

What you simply need to do is have the school assess each student a "parking ticket fee" each semester in addition to the rest of our tuition and fees ... say \$50. This will work out for you in several ways.

First, you are assured of payment ... we complain about all the fees we have to pay, but we pay them; what's one more?

Second, you can reduce your staff;

no need for patrols because there is no need to ticket — we've already paid. That should mean extra money in your budget ... whoa — office party or bonuses for the entire staff.

Finally, no need to bounty hunt for offenders (or anyone remotely connected with them.) This will be a service to the student when he finds he is no longer in jeopardy of being assessed "surprise" fines on his tuition bill, or even worse, blocked.

Come on, PTTS — are you so hard up for money that you have to conduct business with the morals of a repo man? As my friend says, "how far do we have to bend over?"

Thomas A. Bird
Class of '92

Silver Taps a special, meaningful tradition

I am a transfer student and pledge class president of Kappa Sigma Fraternity. I attended my first Silver Taps on Tue., Nov. 3. It was partly in honor of Kappa Sigma graduate student Henry Stanley Langendorf, Jr. He was a friend that I had hoped one day to call a brother. I am extremely proud to be a student in a school that shows such great respect for its students. I hope that as I finish my final years I can carry on the traditions of Texas A&M and the values of Kappa Sigma Fraternity.

Robert Earl Moore
Class of '93

Students getting raw deal on textbooks

Text books cut big shares from students' meager incomes. What the students are concerned more about are the contents of the textbooks, not their fancy looks and glossy finishes.

I think it is time that we request that publishers make available in our bookstores paperback editions (soft covers and inferior quality printing paper) which are available through the same publishing houses in other countries at less than 40 percent of the price of hardcover books.

Sandip Dutta
Graduate student

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