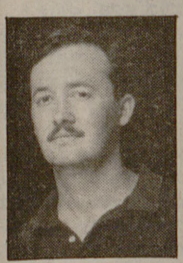




Taking sides:

Should government end the ban on homosexuals in the military?



MATTHEW DICKERSON
Columnist

"The homos are building landing strips for gay Martians," says a rock song that satirically captures the paranoid, fascist psycho-hate directed at homosexuals in this country. It should come as no surprise that the ban on homosexuals in the military springs from the McCarthy era. The Defense Department regulation requiring discharge of gays was officially promulgated in 1949. "Perverts Called Government Peril," screamed a New York Times headline in 1950. Today, some would have you believe that gays are the military's peril.

The U.S. military threw away \$500 million during the 1980s discharging 16,800 gays pursuing what Defense Secretary Dick Cheney calls "a quaint little rule." And recently, the Navy R.O.T.C. began requiring midshipmen sign an affidavit saying they can be dismissed and forced to repay scholarships if they are found to be gay. However, previous attempts to recoup scholarship money in this manner have failed in other branches of the services.

The ban should be lifted because it is unfair to many qualified gays, male and female, and it deprives our military of their talents.

The argument that gays risk security breaches due to blackmail isn't tenable. The ban on gays actually promotes blackmailing gays who cannot risk being exposed under the threat of the government cutting their careers short. AIDS is the big non-issue of this debate, as recruits and servicemen are routinely tested.

There is no question that gays can perform their duties — gays can and do serve effectively in the U.S. military, several with distinction. And of the 16-nation alliance of NATO, only America and Britain maintain a strict policy of excluding gays from the military. Canada, as of October, eliminated barriers to enlisting gays.

The best criterion is conduct, not sexual preference. Should all heterosexual males be punished for the acts of those males involved in the Tailhook scandal, or just those straight males that harassed and mauled helpless women? Those that committed the crimes should be punished, not all straight males. Likewise, gays that harass their colleagues should be disciplined. Currently all gays are targets for expulsion for nothing more than sexual preference. Gays that do their job should be left alone.

The fear that morale will suffer if the ban is lifted is reasonable, especially at first. Just as racists strained mightily over working with African-Americans and sexists chafed over working with women, so homophobes will agonize over working with gays.

Only when straights work with capable gay soldiers will they lose their fear of them. The armed services should devote itself to accepting and integrating gays into the military.

The time bomb of extreme left-wing liberalism hiding in President-elect Clinton's political closet is emerging from its dormant pod with the current push to allow homosexuals in the military.

Admiral Crowe, Colonel Hackworth, General Colin Powell and retired General Norman Schwarzkopf have all given Clinton a resounding "No!" to the question of allowing gays in the military. These esteemed military men cite declines in troop morale and fighting effectiveness as the major obstacles to this measure.

Granted, in the heat of combat a soldier's sexual orientation is irrelevant. As an example, Israel allows gays and lesbians in the military; but Israel is a tiny country the size of New Jersey, surrounded on all sides by hostile neighbors. The United States has no such shortage of manpower.

Peacetime is where the Byzantine maze of problems rears its ugly head. Soldiers living and sleeping together in barracks might not feel comfortable showering next to a man who has an erection.

Allowing homosexuals in the military would no doubt prompt a mass exodus of career military personnel. Sabotage is another concern. Fistfights and other hostilities are sure to arise as cliques form around gays and heterosexuals. Gay soldiers who achieve rank could sexually harass heterosexuals with advances and threats — the Navy Tailhook debacle demonstrated that sexual harassment is a divisive issue.

The argument that gays already are in the military is invalid as the sexual orientation of these individuals is unknown. Thus, their effects on morale are empirically unknown. In battle, the soldiers of the future might well have their eyes on those around them instead of on the mission.

Then there is the issue of AIDS. Considering the promiscuous lifestyle often associated with homosexuality and the concurring high rate of HIV infection, what risks do soldiers run on the battlefields strewn with blood? What about the medical bills for AIDS-infected soldiers? Uncle Sam will be left to foot the bill for the lifestyle decisions of homosexual soldiers.

The military is an institution which has been built over the course of centuries of warfare. The military exists with a legal system all its own. Such an institution is ill-suited for the social experiment of homosexual integration. In the course of this debate we would be wise to stand clear of homophobic gay bashing. Reasoned discourse suggests that gays are not inferior human beings. There is dignity to all human life.

Clinton, a draft dodger with zero knowledge of military life, must face this issue head on to satisfy one of the extremist groups which helped to elect him. If his homosexual agenda is enacted it shall prove to be the beginning of his end.



ANTHONY LOBAIDO
Columnist

MAIL CALL

A kinder, gentler Elephant Walk

The purpose of this letter is to inform the members of the Class of '93 of the reasons behind the "Preserve the tradition — keep it clean" campaign sponsored by the Class of '93 Council and Traditions Council.

Traditions tend to change as many years go by, but there should be a limit to the discrepancies. Our feelings about Elephant Walk are deeply rooted in the fact that we have supported the Class of '93 and Texas A&M throughout our four years. As seniors this year, the thought of spending our last year on campus as members of the Twelfth Man saddens us. What saddens us even more, however, is that to participate in one "tradition," some people will find it necessary to destroy our campus that we otherwise hold so dear.

We are directing our concerns at anyone or any class in particular. The fact is that in years past the seniors have come to Elephant Walk as fully armed as the underclassmen who wish to lay them to rest. What we are asking is simple. If every senior who wishes to participate in the Class of '93 Elephant Walk would think about the actual purpose of Elephant Walk — to reflect on the memories we have created — the solemn tradition will naturally return. We are certain that we are not the only seniors on campus who will be sad to leave this part of our lives behind.

As juniors on campus last year, the Class of '93 did work with the Class of '92 to promote a cleaner, safer Elephant Walk. We appreciate the cooperation of the Class of '94 this year, and we feel that this year's improvements will be just as great. It will take everyone's support to make this year a success.

Elephant Walk starts this afternoon at 1:00 at the north end of Kyle Field. Gig'em, and beat the hell outta t.u.!

Jennifer Cheatham
President, Class of '93

Let Class of '93 walk, die in peace

In the past, Elephant Walk has been a battle between the juniors and seniors causing destruction not only to our campus, but to anything that fell in its path. This battle is not part of the tradition.

The Class of '94 has been asked to help preserve the "true" tradition of Elephant Walk. This means allowing the seniors to solemnly roam the campus without the threat of eggs, shaving cream, syrup, etc., bombarding them.

We know that the thought of "killing" a senior must be one of the greatest feelings in life. However, with increased damage to campus and the liability that E-Walk entails (e.g. broken bones, vandalism), we as seniors will want the solemn tradition.

The Class of '93 has highly stressed

their desire for us to cooperate and allow them to walk in peace. To achieve this goal, there will be activities going on all afternoon for us — the Fightin' Texas Aggie Class of '94 — to enjoy.

We ask that all juniors meet at bonfire at 1:00 p.m. today. Here we will be taking pictures with a "large gray field mouse from Africa" and we will have a pullout yell practice. After this, we will give a list of our activities for the afternoon.

We encourage all juniors to attend our activities. We promise that you will have a phenomenal time and that you will not regret joining us and bonding with fellow classmates.

Please help us keep the campus safe and clean so that Elephant Walk may be enjoyed for generations to come.

Lisa Rodriguez
Class of '94 Council
Chad King
Class of '94 president
Michael Crain
Class of '94 vice-president

PTTS policies are not unreasonable

For the past two weeks, the Battalion has received a substantial number of letters questioning the billing procedures utilized by Parking, Transit and Traffic Services. As the Student Senate sub-chair to this department, I feel that it is my obligation to you, the student body, to eliminate any concerns that may exist over this policy. Before I proceed with this explanation, it is important that I preface my comments that pointing out that the following procedures are only used when a vehicle without a parking hang tag receives a ticket and fails to deliver a response to that ticket within the allotted 10 days.

A vehicle information sheet is obtained through the Department of Public Safety for all vehicles fitting the aforementioned description. This information is then cross-referenced with the University's files on current students. A search is conducted for a matching home address. Ideally, matching last names are also obtained. In these situations, there is a very high probability that a "proper" match has been obtained. This procedure has been in effect for more than 10 years at this University and has proven to be quite effective.

From the vantage point of a current student, it is important that two key points be made. First it is the responsibility of PTTS to protect your rights as a student paying for the privilege to park in allotted spaces on this campus. The vehicles subject to the aforementioned billing procedure have violated that right and are using valuable spaces that you have purchased the privilege of parking in.

Second, in situations where hang tags are not present, vehicles are ticketed, not individuals. Mistakes can occur. PTTS is run by human beings. Furthermore, it is not standard policy for PTTS to bill a student's roommate for unpaid tickets.

What we as students have failed to realize is that this University provides more parking spaces to faculty and students than any other university in the nation. Furthermore, with the creation of three parking garages and the increase in 30-minute spaces, blue spaces and faculty spaces, this department has effectively responded to the needs and desires of its constituents.

Before we all choose to speak out against this so-called "evil" depart-

ment, please stop and examine all that has been accomplished over the course of the past four years. Parking has definitely improved, and it is time that we as students stand up and take notice.

Jeffery R. Erler
Class of '93

Attack on liberal arts students unnecessary

This letter is in response to Brian Beckom's guest column, "Aggie traditions are worthwhile despite what the cynics tell you." (Mon. Nov. 16.) I must commend him on his very eloquent defense of the many time-honored traditions here at Texas A&M. At the same time, I must also make you aware of the asinine remark you made concerning all liberal arts majors. "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 the glorious traditions of Aggieland..."

Beckom, I am not sure if you think all liberal arts majors are as bad in math as you are at getting your point across without offending one of the largest colleges in this prestigious University, or if you just wanted to contradict yourself.

You wrote, in response to the student who believed the reason we are so traditional is because we as a whole are insecure, that he was buying into an extremely derogatory stereotype. Yet not two sentences later, you reply by stereotyping the entire College of Liberal Arts.

That would be like me assuming that because you are a computer science major, you are a 100-pound geek with acne-prone skin being illuminated by his own personal computer on a Saturday afternoon instead of being at Kyle Field cheering on the Fightin' Texas Aggie football team.

I will save my assumptions about you, and in the future, I hope you will do the same for me and the rest of the Liberal Arts College.

Jennifer Mathews
Class of '95

Saving virginity until marriage wise

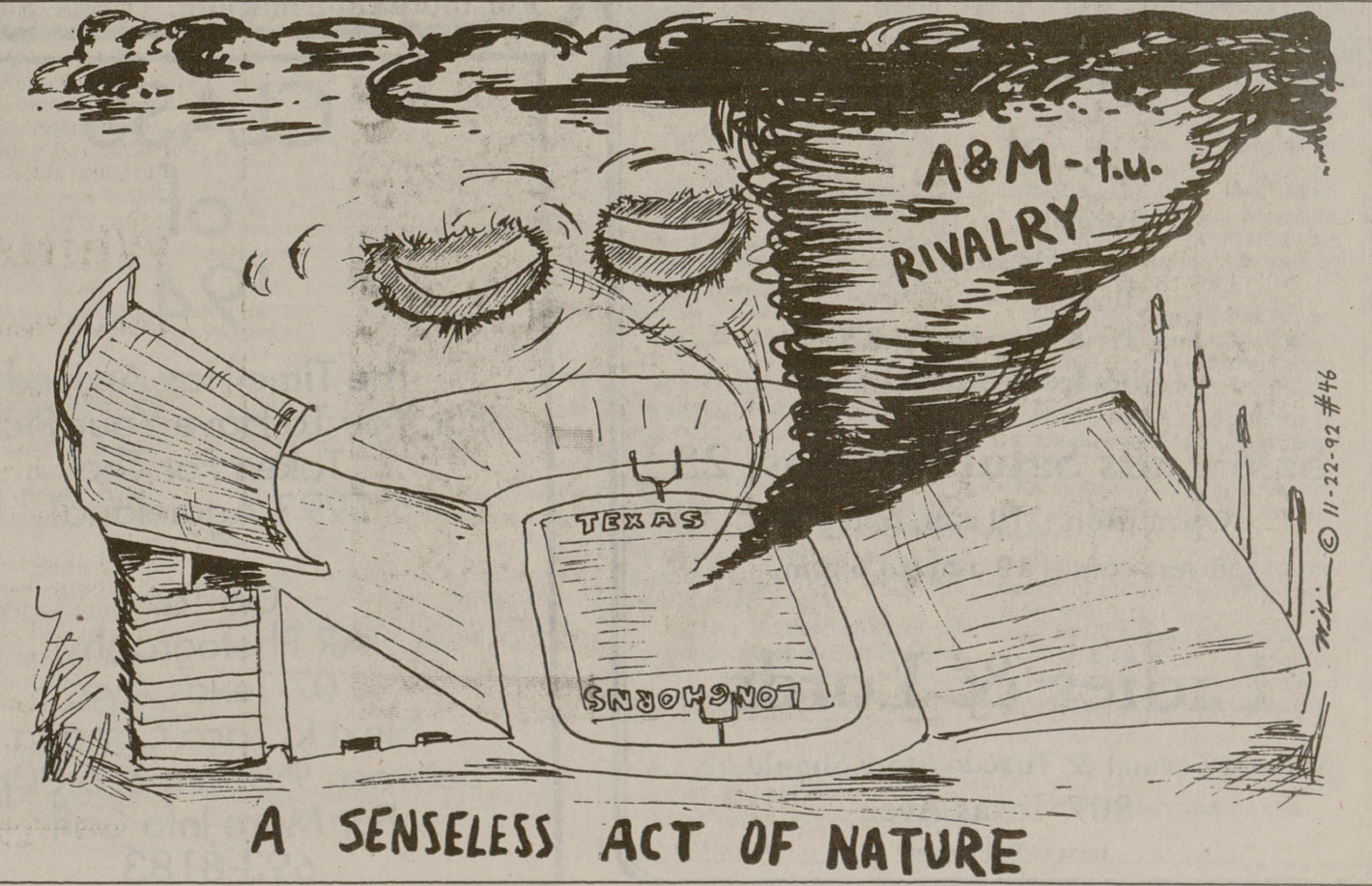
After reading and re-reading Toni Garrard's column about sexual morality ("Morality suffers in sexual sell-out," Nov. 12), I was compelled to write.

I'm proud to say that I wholeheartedly support her view that sex has become a selling product in today's market, virginity is looked down upon, and sex is quickly losing its sacred intent.

I know that our views are in the minority — I'm sure there are stacks of rebuttals not only to Garrard's column, but also to my letter.

I, like Garrard, don't wish to condemn or to judge; I just believe that it is necessary to stop and wonder why we've taken sex off the pedestal it should be on. I don't want to play any self-righteous games, either, because then I'd be a hypocrite. I just want to say to the rest of us who are waiting for marriage: "hip-hip-hooray!" It will be worth it.

Melissa Miller
Class of '96



Dickerson is a sophomore economics major

LoBaido is a doctoral student in educational technology

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