



## RHA rent surcharge robs students of choice

Attention all on-campus residents! Yet another student organization which has lost sight of the fact that it was created to serve us solely at our discretion has overstepped its bounds and is now out to take from us both our money and the right to choose how we spend it.

GUEST COLUMN

PAUL K. PIPER, JR.

divide the collected money equally among all residence halls according to population, each hall would, to some degree, lose the autonomy to decide how active it can be.

And not all of the money you would be required to spend would actually go to your hall where it could possibly benefit you — a percentage will be needed to support the increased level of bureaucratization that this plan requires.

From a policy-maker's point of view, this plan has some good points in its efficiency and structure. But RHA violates the trust of every resident in saying that we are not able to decide for ourselves how willing we are to pay for different activities.

Remember, every on-campus resident is a member of RHA, and every resident has a stake in the policy direction RHA takes.

Do we really want a larger, more powerful, more bureaucratic RHA attempting to provide for every aspect of our extracurricular education? Or do we want a responsive, more accountable organization that will serve and provide only programs the residents are willing to support?

The Residence Hall Association has tried to tell us to believe, because of the results of a questionable survey, that nearly 83 percent of on-campus residents would support the fiscal account fund proposal.

Whatever your opinion on this issue, I urge you to please make these opinions known to your RHA delegate and hall president, and to vote on this issue at the upcoming RHA general assembly on Wednesday, Dec. 2.

The Residence Hall Association, and any other established organization, for that matter, will only be as accountable to us as we force it to be.

Let's see to it that we hold RHA to its intended limits and preclude it from siphoning off any more of our rights.

Piper is a sophomore biochemistry and genetics major

## Preventing the suicide solution

### Be watchful of warning signs during holiday season

The holidays are special times of the year, known for bringing love, cheer and, for some people, suicide. While most people are looking forward to turkey, eggnog and fireplaces, some people are considering ending their lives.

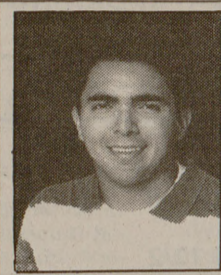
This Thanksgiving my family met at my aunt's Dallas home in one of the yuppiest neighborhoods in the metroplex maze of mini-mansions.

I waited with my cousins as the rest of the family made their ways from Kansas and San Antonio. A snow storm in Kansas made the road trip dangerously icy. My mother begged my sister to wait until the snow stopped falling, but my sister insisted that she, her husband, and my mother's only four-month-old grandson would make it in time for Thanksgiving. My mother relented and spent the next four hours praying for her grandson's safety, as she and my father drove in from San Antonio.

Coming with my parents were my cousins, Cindy and Anthony. Their mother died two years ago, a victim of cancer. Anthony had always clung to his mother. She was his best friend more than his mother. She woke him when it was time for work. She waited up at night, until he was safe at home. I couldn't believe it when she called me one day to ask me to give Anthony a wake-up call because she wasn't able to do so herself.

One day, she won't be around to wake him, I thought. He should learn to function without her, I thought. She won't always be there for him, I thought. After my aunt died, my cousin learned all too suddenly the lessons his mother never forced on him. At 20, Anthony had the years, but not the experience to tackle life on his own.

Anthony said he saw his mother constantly in the months following her death. Sometimes, in the middle of the night, he'd dream of her, the way she was before she left him. She was laughing, always. She was smiling, cooking, cleaning, sewing, doing whatever she needed to do to make life easier for him. She was alive. And Anthony would smile and run to her, thrilled just to see her alive again. He couldn't imagine how, but his mother was alive



ROBERT VASQUEZ  
Columnist

again. She had never died. Who knew why or how. He didn't care. She was there for him, once again.

And to the dark room, lit only by the tiny light on the alarm clock, he would awaken.

"Anthony. Anthony. Wake up," she would say, tugging on his toe, as she had done before. "Wake up, baby." She would say once more.

"Mom," Anthony would say, waking to see his mother standing at the foot of his bed as she had always done. "Mom, I'm so glad you're here." Anthony would say. "I dreamed that you died... Mom... mom..." And she was gone. So often my cousin dreamed that his mother was alive again, only to wake up to the pain of truth. Of life and death.

As my parents pulled into the driveway, my mother whispered a "thank you," seeing that the family had arrived safely. We hugged, laughed and talked about the little things that meant so much, happy that the family was together again.

That night Anthony talked about how the holidays turned his thoughts to times when his mother was alive. He said how he wished he could be with her.

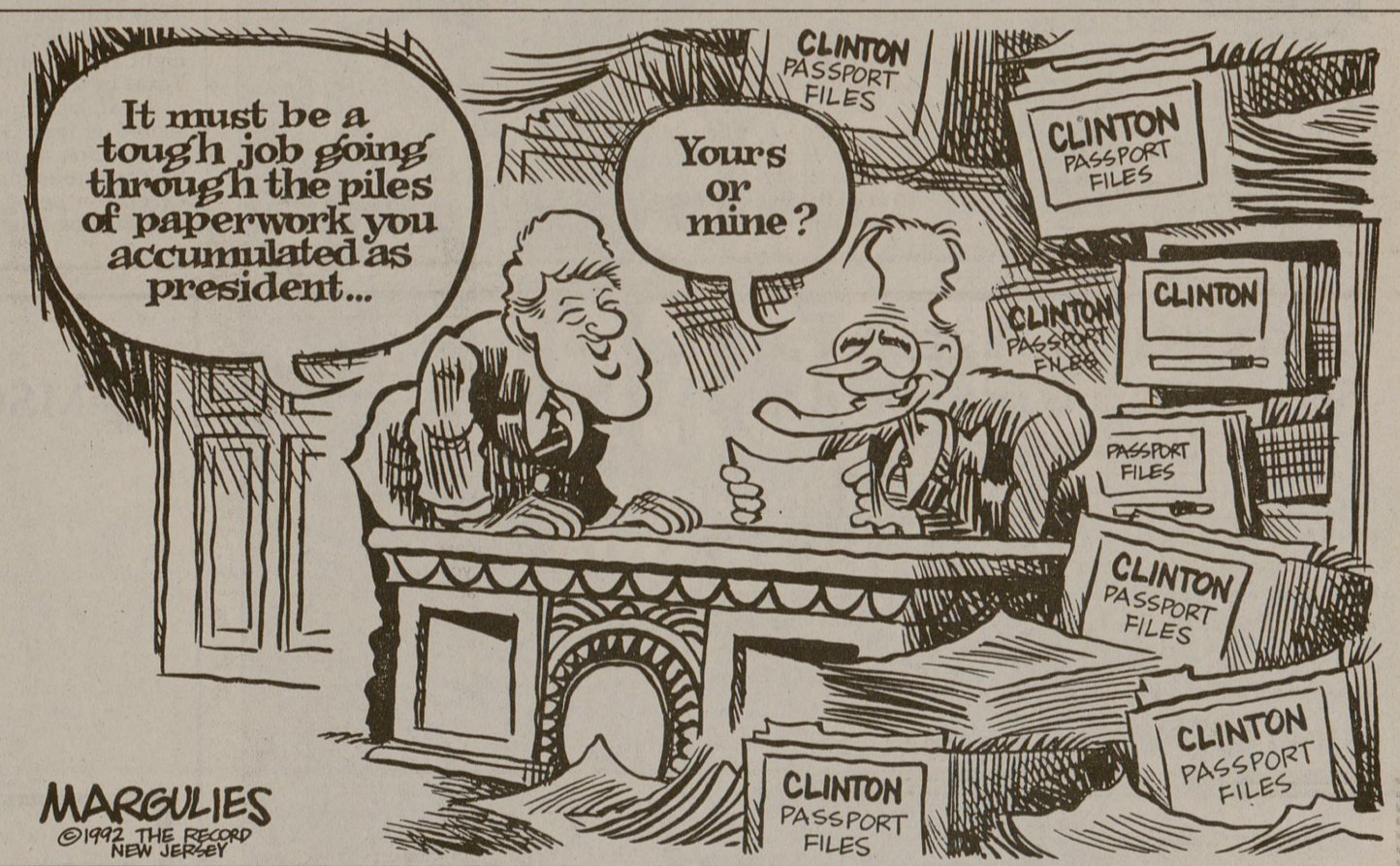
And then he said he had been considering what he could do to make that happen. He said it wouldn't matter if he killed himself. Life would go on, just as it had without his mother. The family would gather, laugh and talk, just as we had without his mother.

He didn't realize the pain his mother's death had caused to others — the times family members would stop in the middle of a wedding or party realizing the deep ache left by someone who would never return. He cried as I told him the number of times my own mother would leave the room to sit quietly alone, and cry for a moment as she wished her sister could share in her joy.

The holidays are a time for extreme emotions. Most people experience their greatest pleasures as families gather for the holidays. Some experience their greatest pain.

The rate of suicide rises to its highest point during the holidays. Many are alone. Many only feel that way. As you celebrate, look around. Enjoy the times together and make sure that others share in the joy. Be careful to watch for others. Some need to share their pain.

Vasquez is a senior journalism major.



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## MAIL CALL

### AIDS not funny blood donor excuse

This past week I have been volunteering for Wadley Blood Drive Services. While asking other Aggies to donate blood I've heard a variety of reasons/excuses why they couldn't donate blood. Some reasons I can understand, like "I'm afraid of needles," or "I'm on medication," but I am truly disgusted by the most frequent excuse I've heard — "I have AIDS" as they walk away laughing. Hey, Ags — AIDS is nothing to laugh about!

I can't possibly understand the mentality of these ignorant people. We have all known someone personally or seen someone through the media who has died of AIDS, and we know it is not a laughing matter.

I can only pray that they never contract the HIV virus or they never know the loss of a loved one to AIDS.

Michelle Biddison  
Class of '92

### Former Battalion writers slam cartoon

It comes as no surprise to me to learn that Sigma Alpha Epsilon fraternity would engage in racist activities such as the jungle theme party held Oct. 3 that raised the ire of State Rep. Ron Wilson. I was saddened but not surprised.

What does come as a shock to me is The Battalion's editorial cartoon attacking Wilson. It's one thing to differ with a man's opinion — that's one purpose of editorial cartoons — but it's quite another to depict an African-American as a "black dog."

That's even more offensive than a group of frat boys gadding about in grass skirts and black face.

I was even more stunned when I read editor Atlantis Tillman's statement in the Nov. 20 issue of the Austin American-Statesman. She told the reporter that it never occurred to her that the cartoon "would come across as being racist."

If Tillman, the cartoonist and any of the other Batt staff members responsible could not see the inherent racism in this cartoon, certainly they should be required to attend the multicultural sensitivity training classes being conducted for Sigma Alpha Epsilon as part of the fraternity's punishment.

When I worked for The Battalion, the newspaper strove to be fair, impartial and professional. Racism and bigotry were ideals we opposed, not embraced. It's disap-

pointing to see another Aggie tradition has crumbled in the dust.

Karl Pallmeyer  
Class of '86

As a December 1990 graduate of the journalism department at Texas A&M, it doesn't surprise me, yet it angers me, to see little or no remorse toward the recent printing of an overtly racist cartoon portraying a black man as being a pesky dog bothering the dominant foot of an A&M Corps cadet.

Having worked for the Battalion in sports, I've seen blacks treated with little respect for quite some time, except, of course, if they play football or basketball.

Those same Corps and frat/sorority members yell their lungs out for Greg Hill, Rodney Thomas and Marcus Buckley, but treat Rep. Ron Wilson of Houston as if he's a stray dog.

I'm glad to see that William Mobley called the lack of editing by your editors "inappropriate," although I must say it sounded as manufactured as it could possibly be, and I wouldn't be surprised if the editor in chief, Atlantis Tillman, was a member of a sorority close to SAE, or a sister of one of the frats involved.

Insensitive, unqualified writers and silly columnists have been a norm at the Batt for some time, and these faults all contribute to the paper's lack of respect outside of Bryan-College Station.

I certainly hope somebody there, namely a faculty adviser, makes it his

or her point to look more closely at the paper's content before it's printed; not for censorship reasons, but for common sense. I don't think many other college newspapers would have allowed the cartoon to run.

I don't expect this letter to be printed, as it is critical of the paper. But as long as somebody there reads it, I feel I've gotten my point across.

Craig Wilson  
Class of '90  
Sports Editor, The Baytown Sun

### Cartoon attacked one man, not all blacks

After reading the "Wilson calls for racial sensitivity" article in the Nov. 24 Battalion, I can no longer sit idly by and listen to Ron Wilson spout forth trash about our great University.

Racism is not rampant here, nor is it condoned. I have heard no one endorse the actions of the Sigma Alpha Epsilon party; rather, I have heard people condemn it, like I do. They were wrong, and they were punished.

If Wilson was a true leader, or even a manager of people, he would know the rehabilitated are more valuable to an organization than those that are removed from it. The rehabilitated serve as reminders that unjust deeds go punished. They can also help prevent further wrongs by being proactive. The removed can do neither.

If Wilson was not so focused on the racial issue he could see that a black dog was used because the ink was black. A white dog on white paper does not show up. The cartoon, in my white male eyes, did not depict "African-Americans in a negative way," it portrayed Wilson for his personal attack on Texas A&M University and the handling of the incident.

Since he objects to the "black" dog maybe the Batt could do a follow-up cartoon using other annoying, but culturally sensitive (a.k.a. politically correct) icons like the fly that will not leave you alone, or better yet a hemorrhoid, which seems appropriate in this situation.

Regardless of Wilson's skin color, he made some remarks that may have been founded in some concern, but they were inappropriate and he deserves to be blasted for his arrogance and "I know what is good for your school better than you do" attitude.

David Fornet  
Class of '93

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We reserve the right to edit letters for length, style, and accuracy.

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