

EDITORIALS

New Editorial Policy Reflects editors, not columnists

The Battalion has changed its editorial policy, and section editors of the paper hope the change will make for a better reflection of their stances on different issues.

Formerly, ideas for Battalion editorials were developed by opinion page staff members and were then either approved or voted down by the section editors. If the original idea was approved, a staff member would then write the editorial.

This policy worked well, but in an attempt to have editorials represent leaders of The Battalion more direct-

ly, Battalion editorials will now be written by editorial board members on a rotating basis.

Columns appearing on the opinion page will reflect, as they always have, only the author's opinion and their subject matter is not dictated by the Battalion editor or members of the editorial board.

Letters to the editor, as in the past, will not be edited for content or subject matter. Space for Mail Call, however, is not endless and there is no guarantee all letters will be run.

AIDS is actively alive in Aggieland

Own up to your actions — be responsible, get tested

While the majority of us were enjoying the festivities of spring break, a friend of mine — we'll call him Joe — learned that his terminal illness had taken a toll for the worst. As a result, Joe will begin taking heavy dosages of various medicines because his white blood cell count, the cells that fight infections, is low.

One year ago this week, Joe was diagnosed with the HIV virus. Talk about a reality slam. I mean, I'm supposed to be too young to know someone — a friend my age, no less — with a virus capable of slowly deteriorating into a dehumanizing terminal illness. What's more, Joe — a young college student just like you and me — is supposed to be too young to have it.



JULIE POLSTON
Asst. Opinion Editor

But that's just it: No one is too young, too healthy, too heterosexual or too "anything" to contract HIV and AIDS. We've all heard the catchy slogan that AIDS does not discriminate, and Joe is living proof. However, people are all too quick to pass AIDS and HIV off as a "gay disease" or as an illness that "serves people right" if they use drugs or sleep around. But no one deserves to contract the AIDS virus, or any illness for that matter, regardless of his or her lifestyle.

And yet, by now, many of you are curious as to how Joe contracted the disease. And for that reason, I'm not going to tell you. It doesn't matter how Joe contracted the virus; his is just one example of the ways the virus is transmitted. What matters is that Joe could have just as easily been you or me. And maybe he is.

I'd be willing to bet that well over half of the people on this campus alone have engaged in some degree of "risky" behavior in their lifetimes. If you think I'm wrong — and I'd love to be wrong about something like this — ask yourself if you know just how the virus is contracted.

Hopefully, most people know the virus is transmitted through sexual intercourse — and that's just one way HIV is transmitted. What most people do not realize, however, is that sex includes oral sex as well as anal and vaginal sex.

Surprised? I was when I began researching AIDS over a year ago and learned that the virus can be passed through oral sex. Vaginal and anal intercourse seemed to be logical forms for AIDS transmission because blood is usually involved.

But what many people do not realize is that the HIV virus is also transmitted through other bodily fluids including semen, vaginal fluids and breast milk. There is even debate about whether the virus exists in saliva and is therefore transmittable through kissing. However, the general consensus among AIDS clinics is that saliva is not a viable source for the

virus, unless of course open sores are present in the mouth.

Like I said, most people have probably engaged in some level of risky behavior, so why people refer to the virus as a disease for homosexuals and drug users I will never know.

Granted, some behaviors are more risky than others regarding HIV transmission. Obviously, a person's chances of coming into contact with the virus increase with the number of sex partners he or she has. On the other hand, however, the AIDS virus only needs one opportunity to pass from one person to the next. And Joe is proof of that.

I'm not suggesting that everyone abstain from sex or drugs or any other high-risk behavior. But as someone who is witnessing the damaging effects of this deadly disease, I am urging everyone to take responsibility for his or her past and present actions. Some people are afraid to be tested because they would rather not know if they have a terminal illness — especially one as frightening as AIDS where research is still relatively new. But this selfish mentality is dangerous because these people continue to put others at risk.

In a nutshell: If you're going to play the game, so to speak, you've got to play fair. And if in fact you are at risk, then it's only fair that you be tested, if not for yourself, then for those people around you.

Anonymous testing is available for free at minimal charges throughout the Brazos Valley at places like Planned Parenthood, the Brazos County Health Department, the Brazos Valley Community Action Agency and the A.P. Beutel Health Center on campus. People interested in information on AIDS and HIV, or testing for the virus can simply call one of these testing centers to schedule an appointment.

As has been my experience, the people at the health centers are very friendly and helpful in explaining all facets of the AIDS virus. No question is left unanswered, as long as you're not too afraid or embarrassed to ask. Appointments usually need to be made two weeks in advance, and once the initial test has been administered, it takes about two weeks to obtain the results — so don't wait until the last week of school to be tested.

Finally, if you're going to play the game, play safe. Use condoms with spermicide nonoxonyl-9 to provide additional protection against HIV. In addition, reduce your number of sex partners and avoid unsafe sexual contact with people who practice risky behavior. Finally, don't use drugs; but if you do, don't share needles.

Information on AIDS is constantly being updated as research continues; therefore, it is important to keep informed on the most current information. You don't have to die from AIDS; just don't be afraid to get the facts — and use them. Because AIDS is 100 percent fatal, but it's also 100 percent preventable.

Polston is a senior journalism and political science major.

Time for a change Russia follows Clinton's lead

Though the Bolshevik revolution occurred almost 80 years ago, and its Communist rule ended in 1991, Russia is again on the brink of revolution. The Clinton administration should assist and support Russian President Boris Yeltsin in any way possible to ensure that democracy and civil liberties prevail in Russia.

In calling for emergency rule, Yeltsin is attempting to supersede the Congress of People's Deputies until the Russian people can vote for a new constitution and hopefully reaffirm their support for him on April 25. Yeltsin has also taken control of state-run television and newspapers.

A new constitution is badly needed. The one currently in use is based on the ideals of communism and socialist rule. Yeltsin's tactics may not be consistent with democratic government, but they are necessary to ensure a free vote next month.

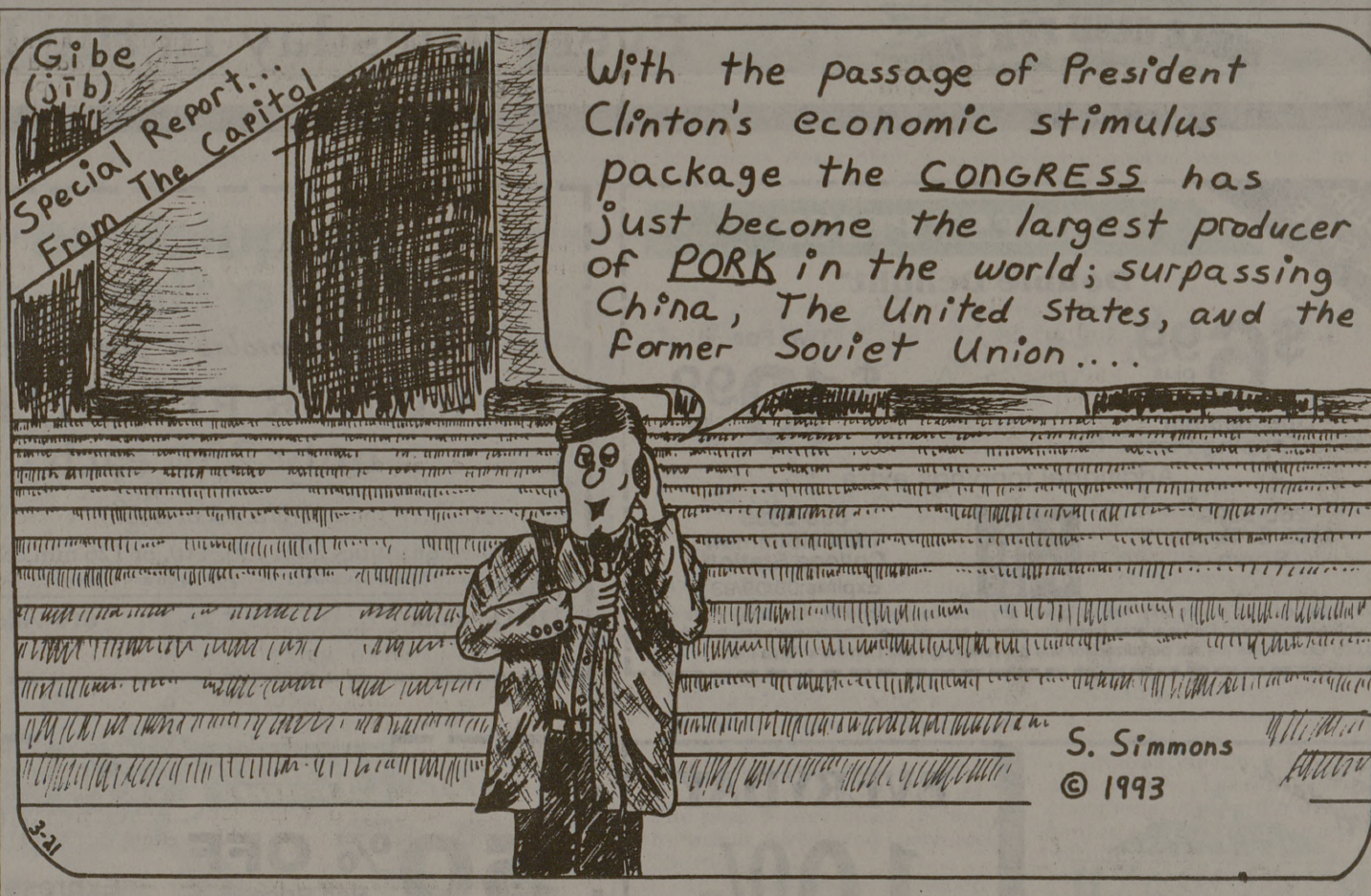
If Yeltsin had stood by and simply waited for the voting date, the Supreme Soviet, or Russian Parliament, would most likely have taken away his power to call for a vote. The Congress of People's Deputies is considered the ultimate state authority in Russia, while the Supreme Soviet functions as the working parliament between meetings of the larger

Congress.

The Clinton administration should impress upon the people of Russia and their political leaders that a return to Communism would mean a deterioration of an already pathetic economy. American political and economic support should be given to Russia only if a democratic government prevails and the April vote takes place.

Those challenging Yeltsin are people who originally supported him and his call for a free-market economy. These people include Communist hardliners already in the Soviet and former supporters of Yeltsin who have grown disillusioned with the president and his plan for free market reforms. These former supporters cite increasing inflation and a foundering economy as primary reasons behind their current unease. Though these may seem like good reasons to some Russians for a return to the old days, Communist rule would only guarantee a return to the Cold War.

The responsibility of the Clinton administration is to let the Russian people know that Communist rule and the inevitable Cold War that would follow will be detrimental to all countries involved.



COLLEGE STATION, TX
MARCH 23
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MAIL CALL

Human nature can be so horrid, complex

This letter is in response to the column by Toni Garrard Clay in the Feb. 25 issue of the Battalion, and I must say I am glad to hear someone go to such lengths to describe the horrifying case of Kenneth Allen McDuff.

This is my first semester at TAMU, and I am often surprised, as is Clay, at the incredulity of many people who do not seem to have heard of McDuff, especially because this "person" isn't just some guy who pulled out a gun in a fight or even plotted to kill for some profit. Kenneth McDuff brutally kidnapped, tortured, raped and murdered victims, chosen sometimes at random.

For the past four and a half years, I lived in Waco (two years with McDuff going to another school in the city since his parole in late '89), and when Melissa

Northrup of Waco disappeared and was found in a ditch last March, the city was rightfully alarmed. I've never seen a community that scared except for hurricane warnings in my hometown. McDuff, who had also been reported as beat up and taunted other students at his school, was not only suspected in the disappearance of Northrup and Colleen Reed of Austin, but in the deaths of at least six other women. By then everyone in Waco knew of McDuff, who is a native of nearby Temple, and knew of his crimes in the mid-60's. Females around my school campus were even urged not to go out at all. Police and federal marshals searched the community with depth rarely seen outside of television, and I've never heard such sighs of relief when McDuff was caught in Kansas City, working as a garbage man.

This man considered human life as worthless. Not only that, but he would rape and kill without a problem. McDuff

is a testament to the existence of pure evil in our world, and if you think that is far-fetched, just think of all he has done without a care in the world. Granted, I don't know anything of the psychology of serial killers or rapists, and I've never heard of Kenneth Allan McDuff until last March, but Toni Clay has reiterated the questions I have often wondered about. Why would anyone do such a horrible thing to another human being? How can anyone have such a low value of another person's life? The Quik Pak store from which Northrup was abducted is on I-35, a common route in inter-Waco transit, and since last March, I don't drive by that store without wondering how human nature could ever become so horrid.

Wade Snider
Graduate Student

Lady Aggies need new basketball coach

The purpose of this letter is to express my gratitude and excitement about the hiring of the Corbellis to lead the A&M volleyball program. This hiring signals that mediocrity will no longer be tolerated. Now that this search committee has

fulfilled its mission, it is time to devote our attention to Lynn Hickey and the Lady Aggie Basketball team.

Hickey should resign as head coach of the A&M women's basketball coach. Hickey should devote her time, talent and attention to the athletic director's position. I attended approximately 95 percent of the women's basketball team's home games this season. She will not get the job done. She should be replaced.

Before discussing the negatives, Hickey deserves credit in several areas. First, she has had two successive outstanding recruiting classes. Next, she has also implemented several positive programs, including the fan van and the Lady Aggie Maroon Club. Finally, Hickey is an extremely nice person who is pleasant to be around and whose talent is better suited to being the athletic director.

The negatives are apparent to those who follow Lady Aggie Basketball. First, she has more depth and talent than any team they have played this year. Hickey should have pressed her opponents every minute of every game. Next, the Lady Aggies don't run a half court offense very well. There is entirely too much standing around. There are no picks or movement without the ball. Next, the Lady Aggies have a difficult time inbounding the ball on every dead ball situation. Once again, there is no coaching devoted to this area. Finally, the Lady Aggies are a reflection

of her personality. They are extremely passive and tentative. They need a coach who will instill more aggressive play.

If Tony Barone was the coach of the Lady Aggies, they would be undefeated this year. Yes, the Lady Aggies are young but they are also extremely talented. It is a shame that the talent is wasted and not properly utilized. The status quo in the men's and women's athletic department should not be tolerated. Hickey has been given sufficient time to produce a winner but failed to do so. The time for change is now!

Corey White
Class of '94

Editorials appearing in The Battalion reflect the views of the editorial board. They do not necessarily reflect the opinions of other Battalion staff members, the Texas A&M student body, regents, administration, faculty or staff. Columns, guest columns, and Mail Call items express the opinions of the authors.

The Battalion encourages letters to the editor and will print as many as space allows in the Mail Call section. Letters must be 300 words or less and include the author's name, class, and phone number.

Due to space restrictions, guest columns will not be accepted unless the author contacts the opinion page for prior approval before submitting columns. We reserve the right to edit letters for length, style, and accuracy.

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