



## The Battalion Editorial Board

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## EDITORIAL

### Honest compromise

#### Don't ask, don't tell will have to do

President Clinton's decision Monday to allow gays to serve in the military as long as they keep their sexual orientation to themselves represents a compromise that pleases both sides only superficially.

What Clinton called an "honorable compromise" represents the only option he had that will appease both sides — but only temporarily.

This compromise does not represent the end of the debate, but instead just a lull in the fighting. Gay rights activists are outraged that Clinton did not keep his campaign promise to completely lift the ban on gays serving in the armed forces. Instead, gays will be allowed to serve as long as they abstain from homosexual activity.

Homosexual rights advocates, however, claim that this "don't ask, don't tell" policy does not go far enough to protect the rights of gays, who can still be discharged for homosexual acts.

While this is true, it is only an application of the fraternization rules already in place in the Military Code of Justice. This means that service personnel — homosexual or heterosexual — are not allowed to display affection while in uniform or on duty.

Others oppose any change in the 50-year old directive forbidding ho-

mosexuals from serving in the military on the grounds that openly gay people will lower the combat effectiveness of military units and disrupt unit cohesion.

That rigid argument is the same one used over 40 years ago against the idea of racially integrated military units.

Both sides must realize that they can't get everything they want. That's the nature of compromise — taking and giving. Gay rights groups gained a little more acceptance and the chance for homosexuals to serve in the military. Those opposing homosexual military service can point to the fact that the military has not totally lifted the ban on gays.

Neither group wins its fight; neither group loses. Instead, the battle spreads to guerrilla warfare in the courts and in Congress, with the rest of us waiting on the outcome.

Already, Georgia Sen. Sam Nunn, the Democratic chairman of the Armed Services Committee, has promised his own legislation dealing with gays in the military. Several members of Congress have vowed to fight it.

In addition, several cases are winding their way through the federal court system. This compromise has settled nothing.

One fact remains: the battle over gays in the military is far from over.

### Appointee scrutiny a waste of time

#### Forget the 'honest' politician; they're all a little bad

Recently we have been faced with yet another Clinton nomination abomination, not in the sense that the candidate is underqualified, but there seems to be a tendency in the administration to abandon nominees after questionable information has been released on them.

Such is the case with the current nominee for Surgeon General, Dr. Joycelyn Elders. Elders' confirmation hearing is being postponed for a week because of a lawsuit she is involved with as a bank director in Arkansas where she was also health director. The parties involved in her confirmation agreed to review the information prior to starting the hearing.

OK, we all know that no matter what party the administration is, and no matter what office is open or which individual is named, the opposing party digs like hell to find even the most minute evidence of foul play in any aspect of the nominee's life. Robert Bork, Clarence Thomas and Zoe Baird, all of whom were excellent candidates for their respective positions, were unduly run through the ringer for ridiculous accusations.

First, let's determine what constitutes a large enough problem to deem a person unfit for a government office. As I recall, Robert Bork's flaw was that he was just plain too conservative, that with Bork as a Supreme Court Justice, there would be no need to speculate as to what his decisions would be.

Thomas' case was even more ridiculous in that his appointment seemed to hinge on the manner in which he mentioned there was a pubic hair on a Coca-Cola can to a colleague (10 years prior, no less). Most of us remember Baird's release being based on unpaid taxes for alien domestic help.

Now, it appears to me that all of these reasons — and quite frankly all that I have been aware of in any appointment hearing or even election — have no bearing whatsoever on the competence of the individual for the job.

What about integrity, you say? Well, let me tell you the sad truth. No one — especially someone who aspires to political positions — is free from any dishonest or questionable activity prior to taking office. Why do certain individuals strive for political positions anyway? Because they only



FRANK STANFORD  
Columnist

want to serve their fellow countryman? Ha ha, hee hee.

Why not serve soup at a homeless shelter instead? Although some politics may seem to be more caring than others, it is naive to believe their number one charity is anything but getting and keeping their positions. I certainly hope no student at A&M really believes those buffoons who claim during student elections that they really care about the students, lie to CTs about how much they love the Corps and promise to vote for more gravy on Sbis meatloaf. These individuals, not unlike their grown-up counterparts, wish to bolster their egos while padding their resume. This isn't really wrong, mind you, it's merely human nature — but it should be understood as such.

My point is that although we most assuredly need politicians, to scrutinize for minor descrepancies is akin to using a Dustbuster to clean a haunted house. We should trust the individual "we" elected to make a sound decision (based on what his advisors think, of course), on an appointee that we have to assume is highly intelligent and will do his or her best.

I'm afraid the best defense against unethical or illegal behavior is not integrity, but instead the possibility of getting caught and losing such a cushy job.

Returning to the subject of Elders, the outspoken physician from Arkansas, we are once again faced with a hearing to determine her involvement as a bank director in a "lending practice" law suit. This is the official reason anyway.

The real issue in this situation is that Elders' liberal convictions toward sex education in schools and abortion rights have the Republicans scrambling to discredit her. Aside from perhaps robbing the damn bank at gunpoint, how can such activity (if true) possibly be indicative of her abilities as Surgeon General?

Most political figures — even since Roman times — have been considered to be at best marginally honest, and history for the most part will back that up. Money, mistresses and misrepresentation have been as large a part of American politics as the ballot. What we should do as a nation is just assume the appointee or candidate is something of a crook, but ask if he or she can do the job well. Until we stop confirming individuals for office on ridiculous grounds, we will continue to have politicians like Ted Kennedy passing ethical judgements on sexual harrassment cases. Puhleeeeee.

Stanford is a philosophy graduate student



### Shop owner will be remembered for more than just bicycles

A number of years ago I bought a bike; not an unusual event for many college students. But I had to sell my scooter to get a mountain bike, the Trek 7000 — I got a bike for the inconvenience.



MATT DICKERSON  
Columnist

It seems my doctor thought that the exercise would excise my neural pain and relieve my mysterious joint pain — which it did, after I slept at it (the paunch remains larval at the moment).

Since that time I have enjoyed many rainy day on that bike. Those who notice that my columns reflect all the altruism of a hungry velociraptor should note that I have been knocked down twice by car-Nazis, which has taken its toll.

But there are pleasures that one can

better appreciate walking or cycling than driving. Just last week I pedaled past a magnificent magenta-flowered tree assaulting the blue sky with its stark colors.

The massive tree's caretaker, an elderly woman, happened to be watering this gorgeous plant. She stood there, hose in hand, grinning with pleasure at her dripping prize. As I rolled past, I couldn't help shouting, "It's beautiful!" She called back, "Thank you!" as I went along my way.

I doubt I would have noticed the woman had I been in my car, and certainly not her smile. Verbal acknowledgements would have been out of the question. Cycling permits us the pleasure of assessing and responding to some of the scenery that usually sweeps past us at speeds in excess of 30 miles per hour. No wonder there's such a boom in cycling vacations this summer.

No, I'm not a serious biker. But after nearly three years cycling at least once a week between work, home and school, I have grown to enjoy cycling to the point that I find it hard to imagine ever parting with my bike.

On Thursday, July 15, the owner of Valley Cyclery, Tom Gray died tragically when the plane he was piloting crashed in Mississippi. I did not know Tom in anything more than a "business relationship," and therefore cannot pretend to know the depth of loss his family, friends and co-workers feel with his passing. But in whatever small way my family and I knew Tom, we were deeply affected by his untimely death, and mourn his passing.

I got my bike at Valley Cyclery where I met owner Tom Gray — a tall, athletic man. I had read a cycling magazine for nearly six months before I decided to actually go in, and Tom helped me on a number of visits when I was simply looking around. He answered just about every cycling question imaginable. Tom, even though he was the owner, always seemed to stalk the shop floors to help out customers.

Apparently, he was not the type of business owner that sequestered him-

self alone in an office away from his customers.

Tom personally helped me select a bike that was right for me, and over the years he also fixed a number of my flats. I can't remember a time that I was in his shop and he wasn't there, whether it was helping a customer or, grease up to his elbows, fixing a bike. Always energetic, he seemed to truly enjoy his work.

The last time I saw Tom was some months ago when my family and I went in to the shop to pick up my four-year-old son's vintage 1960's tricycle. The wheels were broken, and we had found it difficult to find some of the parts for replacement. Tom went out of the way, or as my wife put it, "the extra mile" to get and install the hard to find parts so a little boy could begin to learn the joys of "tricycling."

Just last week, I was out walking with my son as he pedaled his tricycle, when we came upon a pile of broken up asphalt. After asking what had happened to the asphalt, he declared in true mountain biker fashion that he was going to go right through it on his tricy-

cle, which he did. Tom helped put a lot of us on two — or sometimes three — wheels in this area. In the process, Tom touched us with his kindness, energy and love of cycling. We will miss him.

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