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"We've stabilized the birthrates of China and India, but we're losing control of late night TV talk show hosts..."

## Dominica: trouble in island paradise

### Everywhere on Earth, someone has dumped trash there



JAY ROBBINS  
Columnist

I suffered through most of the summer right here in College Station. Summer school. Humidity. TV reruns. Thank God for three fantastic weeks I spent with twenty other Aggies on a little island in the West Indies called Dominica.

Dominica advertises itself to tourists as the Nature Island of the Caribbean. Our group traveled there to study its ecology and environment. Seeing the island's one traffic light, millions of beautiful plants and one-in-a-million scenery convinced me that the name is well deserved.

Finding a car muffler in the coral reef, a cookstove in a waterfall and a hundred stray dogs in every alley convinced me that the name won't apply much longer. A spreading civilization is decorating the land with its refuse. The mini-mall conquers more of the natural world every day.

We stayed in an old house that overlooks steep forested slopes and the sea. Many acres around the place are devoted to research and conservation. We measured, sampled and photographed everything from 30-foot tree ferns to ground mold. Sometimes we cleaned up the trash other people left — when we could carry it all.

One of my friends made the point that the island could serve as an analogy to the whole planet. Within a space smaller than Brazos

County, we found nearly every kind of habitat: rain forests, swamps, mountains, farms, cities and nature preserves. As in the wider world, we also saw nearly every way humans can manage to rape their surroundings.

We discussed this problem with our guide. He mentioned a recent talk with a farmer who said, "God put these parrots on Dominica for us to eat, and no one can tell us not to take what we want." Unfortunately, there are fewer than 200 of these birds still alive.

Pure science didn't take up all of our time. Some of us enjoyed roast rabbit with green banana salad. Others drank local rum so strong it stood up without a bottle. In desperation I paid three U.S. dollars for a chocolate bar.

We toured colonial forts and went to Market Day. We hiked uphill both ways through a volcanic zone called the Valley of Desolation. There we watched Boiling Lake bubble up and send steam clouds over the peaks.

Another trip took us to a pristine national park. A sign at the entrance reads: "Take nothing but photographs. Leave nothing but footprints." I wish the whole island — hell, the entire planet — received the same consideration.

The sign's request poignantly illustrated the troubling undercurrent of our trip. No matter where we went, we never found a spot un-abused by humans. The destruction of that fragile, unique environment is well understood. My friend was right. Dominica is a tragically appropriate analogy for our planet.

Trash dumping and ignorance are just the obvious problems. Dominica doesn't possess the resources to control the use of dangerous pesticides and fertilizers. The unseen damages wrought by chemical pollution might easily kill off everything but the cockroaches.

One day I watched a little boy take his

family's drinking water out of a polluted stream. He carried it home in a container which originally held a pesticide banned in the U.S. for causing sterility and birth defects. From classrooms filled with asbestos to ozone holes over the playground, all children face similar risks every day. Once again, Dominica showed me a downsized picture of the world.

Dominica also gave me hope that humanity might soon accept the responsibility for protecting its planetary environment. While I was there, I talked with an eloquent old man named Randolph Paul. Mr. Paul invited me and some other students to his farm where he spent hours explaining every field and crop.

When we said goodbye to Mr. Paul, he told us, "This century — the twentieth century — is the century of physicists. The twenty-first century will be the century of the biologists. They will study microbes to give us good water. They will fix up ruined land. They will cure cancer."

When I heard that I nearly changed my major, but I know I could never be a scientist. Instead, I used his words as an inspiration to apply to law schools that offer specialization in environmental law.

There's no excuse for playing stupid about threats to the environment. Recycle. Don't ask for shopping bags when you don't need them. Turn off the lights when you leave the room.

Everyone can find ways to use their talents to protect the land. After all, we're borrowing it from our children.

Jay Robbins is a junior English and political science major

## EDITORIAL

### High speed rail

#### Bullet train right track for Texas

The Texas High Speed Rail Authority appears at last to be on the verge of constructing an all-new bullet train. Texas TVG Corporation is the American French consortium tasked with the construction of this system — a job expected to be completed by the end of this century.

The advantages of the system are obvious. They range from simple convenience to travel safety to new jobs.

Traveling by car, a trip to Houston from Bryan/College Station lasts anywhere from one and a half to two hours. Dallas cannot be reached in less than three hours.

By bullet train, a trip to Houston would take an estimated 43 minutes, with a Dallas trip lasting only about 70 minutes. For those who make these and other trips frequently, these savings in time and lost productivity make the bullet train a very attractive option.

Projections suggest that eventually this transit system will be able to transport 14 million travelers each year. As a consequence, automobile congestion on intrastate highways will be significantly curtailed.

This reduction, in turn, will decrease traffic injuries and fatalities and lessen the amount of pollution in the state.

The design for this system is the same as that used in France on its well established, highly successful trains. It is a design that incorporates the latest in efficient, speedy and environmentally conscious technologies. The train would be powered electrically and would thus yield little to no environmental fallout. Capable of speeds of 150 to 180 miles per hour, this technology is inherently efficient, especially when compared to the slow, fuel-guzzling diesel engines of old.

This project would greatly benefit the Texas labor force as well. Reaching all corners of this state and requiring thousands of hours to construct, this project would necessitate a massive work force. That is, steady work would be created for thousands over the rest of this young decade.

The benefits are plain. The electric Texas bullet train is a superior concept that will languish no longer. It is coming, and Texas will assuredly be the better for it.



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## Roommate problems? I'll tell you about roommate problems

Sooooo, you think you have roommate troubles?



FRANK STANFORD  
Columnist

For better or worse, a significant part of college life is adjusting to dorm or apartment life.

There are basically two kinds of organisms that have to be dealt with in a dwelling. Both can be found in the newspaper or mentioned by friends.

Sometimes, when you're the added renter, they are already occupying the room or apartment.

If this is the case, it's usually a good bet that you're being watched by the current inhabitants for signs of future behavior. Generally, they are most concerned with how disgusting you'll leave their kitchen and who's responsible for cleaning it up. They never really ask if you're clean or not, but be certain they're wondering.

Enough about roaches. The second scourge of the home is the filthy, creepy, dark and difficult human vermin commonly known as the "roommate from hell." This particular type of beast exists in every student's life at one time or another and is always terrific conversation fodder on those occasional bad days. Many a whiny complaint session contains the phrase, "... and to top it all off, my roommate keeps ..."

We've all heard or even experienced the other possible endings to this phrase. If the lodging involves women, the gripe often ends with something like: "... leaving hair in the sink" or "... hogging the phone" or, the ever popular cat-fight instigator, "... borrowing my stuff."

It has been my observation that female roommates from hell seem to be worse than males. Of course this could also be due to women having a lower tolerance for deviant roommate behavior and/or relishing the opportunity to yap about it.

There's also a most puzzling characteristic about girls' rotten roomies. When you meet them, often with prior warning, they turn out to be some of the nicest people you've ever met. Later, your friend insists that her roommate is

never that nice. It must have been the moon or something.

Guys, on the other hand, are really quite tolerant of whatever minor differences, if any, there may be.

First, guys don't borrow clothes from each other. After at least 12 roommates over the years, no one has ever asked me, "Frank, I just don't have anything to wear, may I borrow your T-shirt and that

**"How bad could it be?" we thought. An engineering major? Education? Or, heaven forbid, another philosophy wacko? Would that we had been so lucky.**

cool pair of dirty gym socks that go so well with my sweat-stained sneakers?" In addition, phone usage and bathroom cleanliness are usually pretty low on the scale of importance — often just above dusting the light bulbs.

As for the phone, who cares? They'll call back if it's important, right? So basically, there are only two ex-

amples to males living together: tolerable and intolerable.

Everything from marginally annoying peccadillos to fairly major personality disorders are sort of lumped into the tolerable category. Actually, I wasn't even certain that totally unacceptable behavior existed in a male multihabitat environment. Wrong, very wrong.

This summer, my roommate, who leased our house and thus assumed the responsibility of obtaining renters, was so distressed at the possibility of rent concentration that he threatened to take to the streets in search of our fourth roommate.

"How bad could it be?" we thought. An engineering major? Education? Or, heaven forbid, another philosophy wacko? Would that we had been so lucky.

Jerry was dropped off in our yard that afternoon, drunk, dirty and stinking, with a small suitcase containing all his belongings. He was nice — greasy nice — with an ear to ear smile that never disappeared.

"He's cool," my roommate said. "I found him at a construction site. He has a job and everything."

Jerry's job lasted about another week, making him late with rent money. We let

it slide. Jerry was cool. After a week, Jerry mentioned that a while back he did three years in the "big house," and asked if we minded. Well, justice was served — and Jerry was still cool.

Soon Jerry began bringing some unsavory individuals over to drink beer. Since I've been the unsavory character myself before, we decided to say nothing. By the end of the month, my roommates and I discovered we were missing an electric drill, a VCR, a gold watch and a new 10-speed, not to mention the rent money. In addition, Jerry's room had evidence of crack cocaine usage.

We decided this was a little more than we could tolerate, even though he rinsed his dishes before putting them in the washer, and emptied the trash on Fridays. Jerry was history. He didn't come back that afternoon and his suitcase was gone.

Three college students learned a great deal this summer without even going to a class. And when we get another roommate, I don't think his major is going to be quite so important. We'll even lend him our dirty socks if they match his shoes.

Frank Stanford is a graduate philosophy major

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### Put in your two cents: pay PTTS in pennies

I can understand that A&M needs some sort of parking enforcement; however, the frustration of the students, I think, comes from the hefty fine, as well as the helplessness felt when handed the ticket.

The fines should be cut in half. Until then, I encourage anyone that gets fined, to pay it in pennies.

When I get ticketed, I have to dig deep into my pockets to afford it. Gee, all I can find is the pennies I've been saving all these years.

If the PTTS is here to help us, then tell me, what have they done besides write

tickets?  
 Warren Ferguson  
 Class of '95  
 Accompanied by 6 signatures

### No Core Curriculum bad idea for students

I am somewhat dismayed by the tone of Eliot Williams' column on "time for learning." It reflects an attitude that I see too often among the students, not just here, but in other institutions of higher education.

Specifically, he feels he doesn't have the time to do what he wants to do, but

instead of restructuring his "goof-off time" to allow for other things that he wants to do (e.g., reading about chaos theory. Right), he wants to reduce the time spent studying. At first I thought he was poking fun at students who refuse to let studying interfere with their partying, but I've been assured that he was serious.

I find it difficult to take him seriously when he blames the University for his problems. The people I know who are interested in self-learning have no problem doing it and their schoolwork as well.

While Mr. Williams is only spending 22 hours a week in class and labs, these people are carrying that many credit hours plus many of them are raising families besides. I can assure you that they are as sane as any of the electrical

engineering majors.

I can understand, but not sympathize, with his aversion to taking the Core Curriculum. As a student at Cornell University, the engineering students I knew had absolutely no interest in knowing anything about the world around them. History, literature, music, biological sciences, human society, etc. were anathema to them. They saw no point in even being aware that anything outside of the physical sciences and getting blasted on weekends even existed.

The fact that Mr. Williams seems to dislike the Core Curriculum is one of the best arguments for its necessity that I can think of.

Daniel K. Miller  
 Veterinary Pathobiology