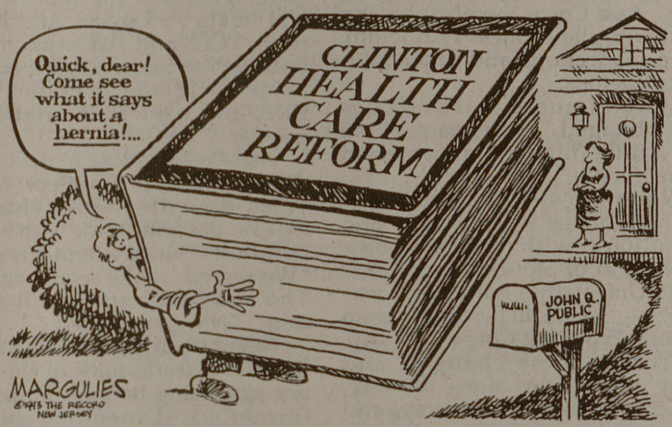


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## Looking at life through another's eyes Don't be afraid of people just because they're disabled



ROBERT VASQUEZ  
Columnist

Sometimes life seems too much for me. Last week, the days were sweltering like a steamy sauna. The bills were piling up like a stack of homework assignments and my life smelled like a fresh pile of dog dung. I was pretty low.

Then I met Wendy. Wendy Rigden is a senior speech communication major and a singer in the Aggie Women's Chorus. She takes class notes for friends with physical handicaps and plans to get a job in public relations when she graduates next year.

Wendy is also blind. You may have seen Wendy walking across campus or standing at a street corner, patiently waiting for Felicia, her guide dog, to tug on the leash and cross the street when it's safe to do so. Felicia's a good dog, but it's fortunate that Wendy doesn't rely too heavily on Felicia's judgment.

"I could hear an 18-wheeler coming and Felicia would be tugging to cross already," Wendy said. "I would say, 'You can go if you want to, Felicia, but I'll stay here until the truck passes.'"

Wendy doesn't always talk to animals. Ordinarily, Felicia is a good helper. But many people give guide dogs credit for things they can't do.

"How does your dog know how to get to the MSC from here?" people often will ask. "Well, she doesn't," Wendy answers. "It's not like I can tell her, 'Take me to my next class,' and she heads straight for it. I have to know where I'm going. I have to point her in the right direction."

At 23 years of age, Wendy has learned many of life's lessons much faster than others her age.

"My mother never let me get away with things just because I was blind," Wendy said. "She always made sure that I got out and tried things for myself."

And Wendy did try things — things that would amaze most people. Wendy likes to skate, ride bikes and ride horses.

"It's not like I never fell down," she said. "I had wrecks. And a horse stepped on me once, but it didn't mean to. I just got back up again."

Going to college is one thing many people would not expect of a blind person. But it was never a question in Wendy's family.

"My mother would tell me, 'You're not getting married until you graduate from college.' How did Wendy respond?"

"I just looked at her," she said. "Predicting those things is pretty pointless."

One thing that is predictable is how people will react when they first meet Wendy.

"Most people try to avoid talking about my blindness," she said. "They try not to use words like 'see' or 'watch' or 'look.' I think that's crazy. It would be impossible for me to stop using those words all of a sudden. And I don't expect others to do it. I use those words all the time. When people say 'I just saw someone' they don't mean that they only saw

them with their eyes. They usually mean that they talked to them. That's how I mean it."

Wendy knows what it's like to be uncomfortable when meeting someone with a handicap. She remembers when she first met someone in a wheelchair. She didn't know what to say. She felt like she couldn't discuss the handicap without offending the person in the wheelchair. That person, who later became a good friend, quickly put Wendy at ease.

One time Wendy tripped over something. Wendy smiled and told her friend, "I'm sorry. I can't see two feet in front of me."

Her friend laughed and said, "What's wrong with you? Are you blind?" Wendy laughed and said, "Well, yes, but I bet I can jog better than you."

After that, Wendy realized that the person in the wheelchair was not much different from her. She simply wanted Wendy to loosen up, to be comfortable around her.

And that's what Wendy wishes for others. "I just want people to be themselves. Don't be afraid of people with disabilities. If you're uncomfortable, acknowledge that fact and move on. But don't let that stop you from making a friend or learning something new."

Wendy said that more than anything she wants to help people learn, just as others have helped her learn.

"I'll take any opportunity to help educate people," she said.

And that's exactly what she did for me that day. She helped me learn. About her, about people. And about me.

Thank you, Wendy.

Robert Vasquez is a senior journalism major

## EDITORIAL Disband ATF

### Outdated agency should go

The Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms has recently come under a great deal of criticism and scrutiny following the debacle in Waco last spring. Now, a review of that action that promises to be very damaging is set to be released on Thursday. Much of its content is already known.

This review, while specifically about the Waco disaster, points to a broader conclusion about the ATF. First, this is a bureau without a legitimate purpose for being. It is obsolete. Second, it is plagued by ineffective, non-communicating leadership.

Among those consulted on this matter were six tactical experts.

One suggested that the raid was "doomed from the start." Countless examples point to the fact that secrecy, upon which the action depended, was greatly compromised. For example, KWTX-TV of Waco was alerted to the raid by a local ambulance company employee who had been hired for emergency response.

Early in the operation, the ATF inserted an undercover

agent inside the compound. The agent, Robert Rodriguez, reported to the Bureau that Branch Davidian leader David Koresh had prior knowledge of the forthcoming actions against him.

ATF Director Stephen Higgins explicitly mandated that the operation be canceled in the event secrecy was breached. Rodriguez's report alone should have halted this operation.

The ATF was created by the U.S. Treasury Department in the 1920s to enforce the policy of prohibition. At the time, tobacco and firearms were considered contraband, too. Today, alcohol and tobacco are certainly regarded differently, and for the time being most types of firearms may be possessed legally as well. These facts alone ask the question of why, in this day and age, there is an ATF at all.

In this time of "reinventing government," the ATF has distinguished itself as a perfect candidate for disbanding. If for no other reason, it must cease to exist in the interest of streamlining government.



## Long live the King! Dead celebrities keep going and going

The "Rest in Peace" inscription on gravestones is one of the most misunderstood of human traditions. For many public figures, death is more exploiting than their lives.

Since the beginning of time, humans have been enthralled by the dead — especially famous dead people. The massive pyramids that bring people to Egypt from around the world to stand awe-struck before their architectural magnificence are, in the simplest terms, nothing more than really big tombstones. Granted, they are there to enjoy the artistic magnitude of the structures. However, the idea of the enduring influence that the "living dead" retain in modern society is highlighted by the pyramids.



JENNY MAGEE  
Columnist

It seems kind of strange to me that I know more about the intimate details of John F. Kennedy's life than I know about some of the people that I come in close personal contact with everyday. And the man has been six feet under since Nov. 22, 1963.

The world is currently obsessed with the Lives of JFK, Elvis Presley, James Dean, Marilyn Monroe and countless others. They are everywhere lately, from coffee cups to calendars to underwear. People have spent thousands of dollars to own a pair of Monroe's old panties or the King's sequin-studded bell bottoms. There is nothing to say in favor of advocating disrespect of the dead or to distract from the tragic events that brought about their demise. But, there is definitely something to be said for letting the dead ... be dead.

The parents of one of my high school friends take the cake on Elvis fandom. I can overlook her father's five-inch sideburns, but they have converted their laundry room into an Elvis shrine. In the company of dirty underwear and smelly socks, the King hangs on every wall and

parks his blue suede shoes in every nook and cranny. If Elvis were alive today, would he feel honored by this position as laundry room decor?

So much time and energy goes into this idolatry of dead stars. As a society, we seem unable to let go — despite the fact that we never knew these people on a

**The parents of one of my high school friends take the cake on Elvis fandom. I can overlook her father's five-inch sideburns, but they converted their laundry room into an Elvis shrine.**

personal basis or had any contact in their everyday lives.

The attraction is attributed to the fact that it is extremely easy to idealize dead people. For one, they are not able to constantly remind us of their faults — all their humanness is conveniently and safely fertilizing flowers. America is a society

that places emphasis on great leadership and people who live their lives in the public limelight. We build statues and monuments and force-feed our children tales of the extraordinary lives of people like George Washington, Abraham Lincoln and Martin Luther King, Jr.

While these people stood for noble ideals, the actual people have been distorted by what society wants to believe they were. They were humans with faults, inconsistencies, desires and prejudices. That is not disgraceful; it is simply the truth.

The perfect example exists right here at A&M. The statue of Lawrence Sullivan Ross has probably shrunk at least two inches from all the polishing that has been applied to the brass over the years. It is undeniable that Sul Ross contributed much to this university in the form of leadership and money. But, fundamentally speaking, what makes Sul Ross any more important than any other Aggie? How many of the people shining Sul Ross's head actually knew the man?

It is all fine and good to admire and remember the people who stood for the ideals that we would like to emulate.

However, it is important to make the distinction between the actual person and the ideal. It is also important to come to terms with the fact that the way we envision these people to be is almost certain to be a distortion of the truth. Time plays a funny trick on reality.

It is not necessary to run out and rid the world of the famous tributes to the dead like the Lincoln Memorial or burn down Graceland. But there is a way to admire people without idolizing them.

People who lead public lives affect and shape history. They bind us together as a society because we share a common knowledge of these people's lives. But, they were just people, and now they are dead people. Tomorrow they will still be dead people. And if we can't find something more important to devote our energies and passions to in the world today, what sort of people will our generation leave as statue subjects? I can see it now. A ten foot statue of John Jones, world famous Elvis impersonator.

Jenny Magee is a sophomore journalism major

COLLEGE STATION, TX  
 SEPT 28  
 1993  
**MAIL CALL**

### 10 reasons minorities should attend A&M

Here are the top ten reasons minorities should consider coming to Texas A&M:

1. Tribal wars are honored by MSC.
2. Young Conservatives think you will be a great asset to the food services department.
3. SAT, what's that?
4. Fat scholarship checks make elite and expensive Greek organizations affordable.
5. If you become a star running back, Aggies may actually like you.
6. Texas Aggie Bonfire offers chance to continue tribal tradition of dancing around the fire to appease the spirit.
7. Cookies and punch welcoming reception by Texas A&M College Republicans.
8. I think the Batt needs to stop taking letters from inexperienced and sheltered fish.
9. I would also like to add that education is our birthright and there is nobody that is going to stop us.
10. Tribal wars are honored by MSC.

from the stands.

8. You might get to rub elbows with a person of a superior culture.
7. Active army recruitment program already has too many minorities.
6. Young Conservatives think you will be a great asset to the food services department.
5. SAT, what's that?

Mario Morales  
Class of '94

### Academic Building should keep old look

I am glad Physical Plant executive director Joe Sugg is pleased with the way the proposed new windows for the Academic Building look. I, for one, am not.

Aside from looking like a gaping hole, there is a noticeable gap between the masonry and the sill because of the improper size of the new window.

If the new windows are an attempt to make the exterior of the Academic Building more consistent with the surrounding buildings, why stop there? Let's really "modern-up" the place by replacing the masonry with new bricks, and have another Harrington building. Or why not go

for a little nostalgia, and put on a new tricolor veneer to match the Biological Sciences building? By the way Mr. Sugg, your choice for replacement windows are not consistent with those on the Cushing Library or the Psychology building.

This is a campus and community of proud traditions, and the physical structures are as much a part of our heritage as are our traditions. This proud grand dame deserves to be treated with care, dignity and respect, not defaced in the name of lower maintenance costs. There are a multitude of window styles available for little or no more cost than the proposed replacements that would better maintain the elegance of the Academic Building.

Randy Allison  
Class of '88