

## THE BATTALION Editorial Board

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## What you don't know might help you Don't be afraid to try a new attitude; you might like it

I've never related to baseball much. However, I was recently thumbing through a news magazine and hit upon a tidbit of information that got me thinking about our national pastime and how it relates to the change of attitudes in our country.



FRANK STANFORD  
Columnist

When Jackie Robinson, a slave's grandson, shattered the color barrier of Major League Baseball in 1947, a number of the players threatened to strike in protest to his race. At the time, of course, this politically incorrect gesture was actually correct political. No one, including Mr. Robinson, was shocked by the dissent on the part of players, and even spectators, for having to associate with or endure watching a colored man play ball. Those who didn't particularly hate the thought of a black player could sympathize with those who did. Some even said it would ruin the wholesomeness of the game.

Well, almost 47 years later, baseball is still dominated by "whites," but the concept of a black man having to fight racial discrimination to play professional baseball is almost unfathomable. The same owners and managers who balked at an interracial team in the '40s and '50s would be in multimillion-dollar bidding wars over some African-Americans today.

Although this phenomenon of change may invoke a desire to join hands and sing "Ebony and Ivory," it's not the passage of time, baseball or even racism that most intrigues me about this evolution of attitudes toward certain individuals or concepts.

The stubborn American tendency to hobble social change is the basis for civil injustice, the problems it causes and the problems it will continue to cause in our culture.

There are three simple steps to speeding up the process of social change: Exposure, realization of falsehoods and truths, and acceptance.

Exposure to, or education of, almost anything feared or hated has positive results, even in cases which have no obvious positive outcomes. To be exposed to other cultures, orientations, ideologies, religions and races is to become aware of reality, plain and simple. The most difficult thing about exposure is the fear and shock it often invokes.

In 1964, the parents of Little Rock, Arkansas schoolchildren were terrified and hateful over a little 60-pound black girl attending an all-white school. Similarly, the conservative faction of the '50s was horrified at the music of Elvis and Jerry Lee Lewis, fearing for the degradation of society. Both established groups, usually non-reactionary, had to face fearful and unfamiliar situations. That scary, required class you just knew you'd hate — but really enjoyed — is another prime example.

However, it's not a certainty that such exposure will automatically change individuals' minds. There is still a Flat Earth Society for the occasional ignoramus. Metaphorically speaking, however, we can all greatly reduce our ignorance by taking enlightening

cruises that encircle the globe.

Realization of falsehoods and truths hopefully occurs sometime during or after exposure. This is when the baseball bigot decides, "Wow, that Robinson fellow can really play; maybe he won't ruin the game after all."

For years I was afraid of and mad at gay people. After working with some gay students in a restaurant, I realized my fear was based on lack of exposure. Thus, my fear subsided. Probably every person on this campus has met someone they just knew they'd hate for reasons of unfamiliarity — a roommate or lab partner of a different nationality, background, etc. — but wound up really liking and understanding that person's differences.

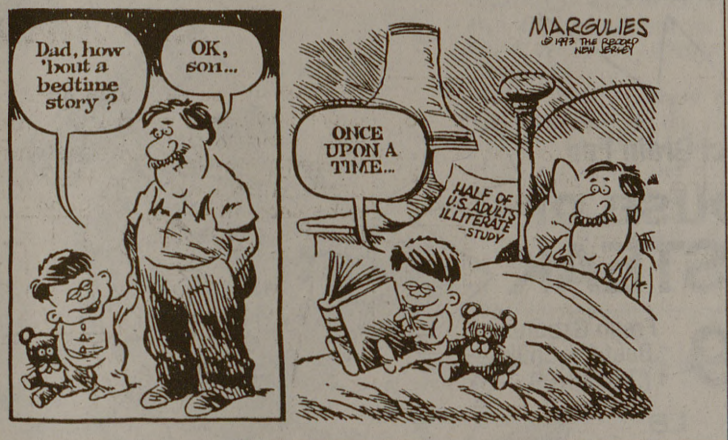
This brings me to the most important stage in social change: acceptance. In order to bring beneficial social change full circle, new ideas and ideologies, differing viewpoints on religion, sex education, politics and even the Aggie Bonfire should only be regarded as different from your own, and accepted as such.

Only when acceptance has been made will different peoples be able to get along. However, as with all social theories, this one of exposure, realization and acceptance is not without flaw.

Acceptance doesn't always, nor necessarily should, follow realization. Jeffrey Dahmer's roommate or lab partner, for instance, would've been wise in rejecting little Jeffrey's desire for spleen sandwiches.

Unless he actually tried one, of course.

Frank Stanford is a philosophy graduate student



## EDITORIAL

### Route to safety Bike paths will save lives, money

Texas is known for being the Friendly State. Now there's a new plan being pushed by the Texas Bicycle Coalition to make Texas bicycle-friendly.

Bike paths promote clean air, less traffic and safer riding. Today before the College Station City Council, the TBC will be fighting to pass the Bikeway Master Plan, which would create seven miles of on-road routes and lanes and off-road bike paths.

This path will be a continuous loop that will link Texas A&M with local schools, the Wolf Pen Creek amphitheater complex, and residential, commercial and entertainment areas.

What exactly will this plan do for students? Currently, anyone who tries riding down Texas Avenue or University Drive is risking life and limb. Bike accidents are entirely too frequent. Just four months ago, a man riding on Wellborn Road was killed.

Areas of improvement will include bikeway crossings under Texas Avenue, as well as bicyclist-activated traffic signals and bike bridges over creeks that are currently diffi-

cult to cross. A very important aspect of the plan is that it emphasizes cooperation between bicyclists and motorists through education on how to share the road safely.

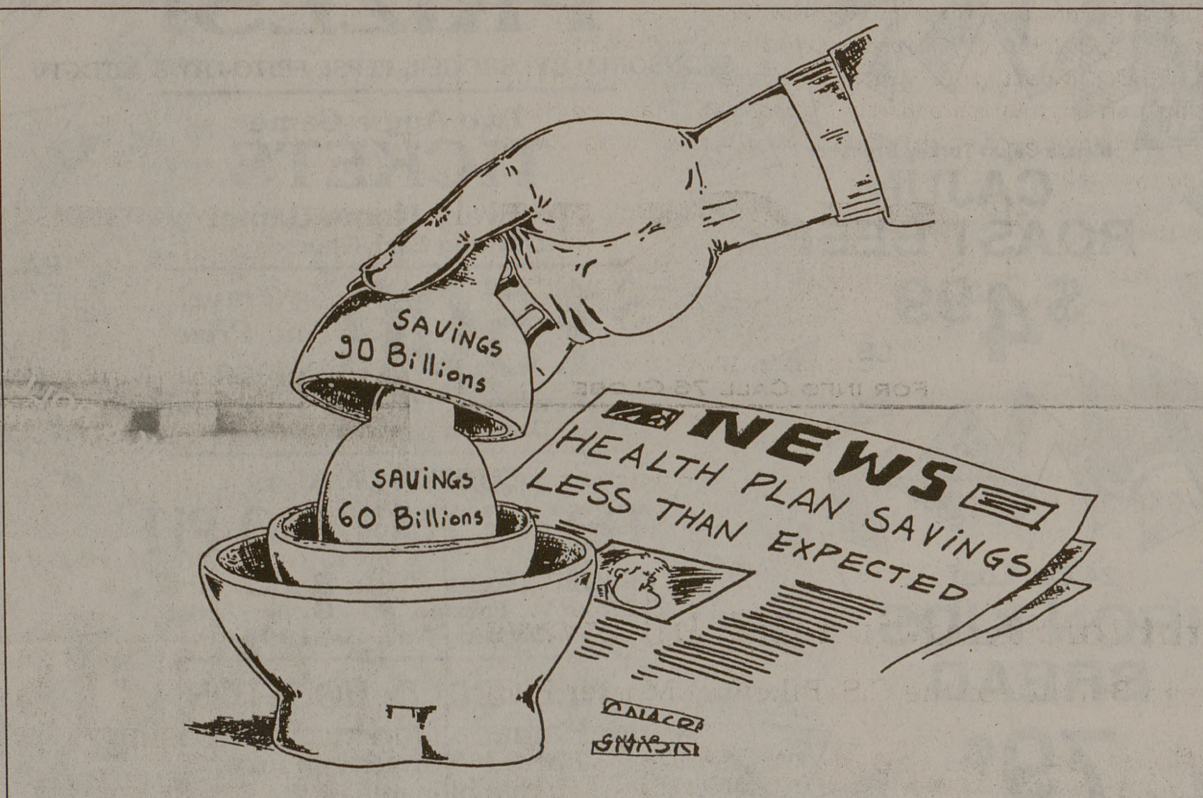
It's surprising that the City of College Station has never taken action to produce a comprehensive bicycle path system before, considering that a federal transportation bill passed in 1991 would make the city eligible for \$1 million in federal aid.

The remaining costs will have to be covered by the city, but in the long run it will actually save money. By one estimate, every bicycle mile traveled will save the public over \$1 in capital investment.

The environmental savings should be considered as well. Texas has the highest nitrogen oxide emissions in the country, more than twice that of California, the second highest state.

Every gallon of gasoline burned releases twenty pounds of carbon dioxide, plus nitrogen oxide, carbon monoxide, hydrocarbons and other pollutants.

Once the bike paths are developed, the entire community, and not just bike riders, will benefit.



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Columns, guest columns, cartoons and letters express the opinions of the authors.

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

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## Homosexuality is not a mental disorder in need of a cure

In Peter Brunone's Mail Call letter of Oct. 7, he stated that the American Medical Association (AMA) conducted a "recent" survey of American psychiatrists in which 69 percent agreed that homosexuality is a pathological condition.

After reading this, I made a valiant effort to locate any reference to this survey. I went to the Medical Sciences Library and thoroughly researched the Medline database, but found neither hide nor hair. I searched several other databases but turned up nothing.

I then called the AMA, since I thought that if they performed such a survey, then surely they would know

something about it. The answer came back a resounding "No!"

In fact, they said it's not their policy to conduct surveys of psychiatrists' opinions on this matter. They wouldn't have asked the question in the first place. Finally, I called Mr. Brunone and asked him for a reference, which he promised to provide. As of my submission time, I'm still waiting.

So we are left with a mystery: from whence came such a claim? Are the people at the American Medical Association performing studies they know nothing about? Feel free to call them at (312) 464-4818 and ask them; I think I know the answer you'll get.

Might Mr. Brunone have meant by the AMA the American Management Association? But no, they wouldn't represent the "medical community" as his letter suggests. Then what is the natural conclusion? The claim is either the result of careless research, or it is outright fiction.

The consensus within the American Psychological Association is that homosexuality cannot be defined as a disorder

(i.e., a mental sickness). In fact, it is mentioned in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders only to say that it is not!

For a behavioral disposition to be classified as a disorder, it must interfere with everyday functioning and adjustment. Yet, when psychologists conduct blind experiments to determine the sexuality of

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productive, happy lives when allowed to do so by society.

There is ample evidence that, like most complex human traits, sexual orientation is determined by a combination of both hereditary and environmental factors. Whatever its origin, being gay is as much a choice as being brown-eyed (even less with the advent of color contact lenses).

Given a genetic predisposition, it's likely that sexuality is determined by environmental factors in early childhood. Yet, psychologists have yet to scientifically ascertain any common denominators in the socialization of people who turn out to be gay. Gay people come from good homes, broken homes and everything between.

As for Mr. Brunone's notable quotations, there still exists psychiatrists who share in his opinion on this issue, clinging to old superstition like some kind of security blanket. Yet, we might question the authority of someone whose "25 years of experience" in clinical psychology is only with those gay people who do not want to be gay. These patients are suffering from low self-esteem brought on by a ho-

mophobic society, i.e., homosexuality is not the real problem. Consider that some of Freud's own hypotheses turned out to be wrong simply because his patients were psychotic and simply neurotic!

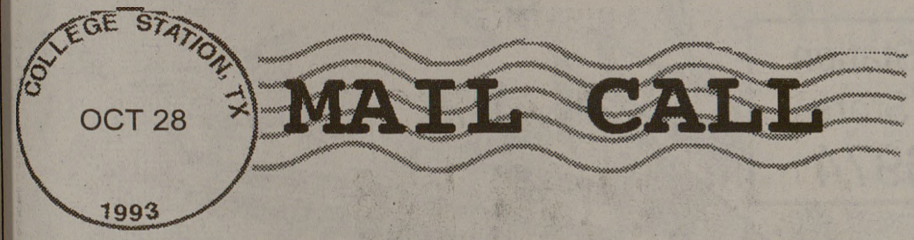
Is it possible for a gay person to become straight? You might as well ask if a straight person could become gay.

Still, claims abound of the "curing" of homosexuals. Proponents of "reparative therapy" conveniently fail to mention that most of these "newly heterosexual" people return to their former homosexual behavior. Maybe the Lord can change gay people into straight people, but this evidently isn't His will!

The upshot of this game of musical sexualities is that people can change their behavior — if they really want or need to — but not their natures. Even if changes of nature were possible, the next logical question is "Why?"

But that's another issue for another day.

Kevin Weller is a senior computer science major



### Aggie spirit lacking in program director

This is a letter in response to "Maroon Tape." I was so glad to see Les Fiechtner, Director of Undergraduate Programs for the College of Business, brought into the spotlight. I would love to hear more stories about Mr. Fiechtner, both good and bad. Of course, I'm sure

that he would deny anything he had said in the bad stories, just as he did in Chris Jakubezak's and probably will in my letter.

Upgrading from catalog 111 to catalog 116, I found that the ECON 322 course that I was enrolled in would count for absolutely nothing in my particular situation. When I switched catalogs, it was one day past the Q-drop period. I was told by a good friend, who worked

where Q-drops are handled, that I could go to my department head and he could approve the Q-drop.

Going to Mr. Fiechtner, I was told this was true. Mr. Fiechtner could approve the Q-drop, but he would not. After asking why, he said it was because he "didn't want to."

He then went on to say — very arrogantly I might add — that if he wanted to, he could Q-drop after the semester, or change a grade from an F to an A or an A to an F. He ended with, "I can do whatever I want."

Personally, I am sorry to call Mr. Fiechtner a fellow Ag. He is the only person on this campus that I have ever said did not belong. So, Mr. Fiechtner, while you may deny or not remember your actions towards students, we do.

Stephen C. Cook  
 Class of '94

### One Lutheran church doesn't represent all

This letter is written in response to the article regarding the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) supporting homosexuality and masturbation.

First of all, I have been a Lutheran since birth. I was baptized Lutheran into the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod and recently transferred to the Confessional Lutheran Church. Since I go to church every Sunday, I would like to think I have a good understanding of the Bible and the Lutheran faith.

Never in the Bible is there a verse or meaning supporting homosexuality or masturbation. On the contrary, throughout the Scriptures, homosexuality and masturbation is shot down.

What about the commandment,

"Thou shall not commit adultery"? This means extra-marital affairs, homosexuality and masturbation is prohibited. I guess this "Lutheran" church has never read the book of Romans. The first chapter openly condemns homosexuality. How can any church organization support it?

This seems to be another case of a church trying to twist the Bible's meanings to what they want to believe. Churches say the Bible needs to change with time. They are wrong. The Bible is constant and people should adapt to it.

Don't get me wrong. Nobody is perfect and everybody sins, but to openly support something the Bible openly condemns is absolutely wrong. This is just a case of a "bad apple spoiling the bunch." Not all Lutherans believe in this absurdity.

Micah N. Hovda  
 Class of '97