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EDITORIAL

Food for thought

Why were top personnel sacked?

The recent removal of top personnel in the Texas A&M department of Food Services raises some interesting questions.

A history of conflict between the department and Robert Smith, vice president of finance and administration, suggests personal rather than the personnel problems Smith cited as reasons for the changes.

The director, assistant director and business manager of Food Services have been shuffled to other departments. The dismissals came after controversy over the privatization of facilities in the Sbsia Food Court. The food service hierarchy opposed Smith, who unsuccessfully pushed for a private contractor to operate the project instead of Food Services.

Smith questioned the officials' dedication in a Sept. 14 memo. However, so far no one has produced any evidence against their integrity. Personal politics and differences are no reason for such an allegation.

The records of the dismissed personnel are outstanding. Former director Lloyd Smith spent

the last 21 years working for A&M Food Services. Lloyd Smith has received wide recognition for his innovative contributions to the industry.

Col. James Moore served as assistant director for the last six and one-half years. Moore also received the Silver Plate of the International Food Service Manufacturer's Association, the most prestigious award in the industry.

George Nedbalek was removed from his post as business manager after more than seven years in the department. All three men were reassigned to other positions in the University administration.

An Oct. 4 memo said an internal audit and restructuring plan resulted in the firings, but the results of the study were never publicized.

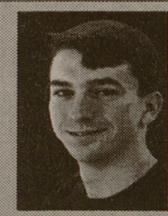
The A&M community deserve a real explanation for the changes. Robert Smith has yet to cite any hard facts to support his radical move.

Personal reputations and the good name of Texas A&M depend on the answer to everyone's repeated question: Why?

Mother uses canvas to express grief

Pain of son's death inspires artist's 'violent watercolors'

Have you ever watched someone die? If so, then you understand that it is not something one soon forgets. Well, watching someone die slowly, wasting away over several months is infinitely more traumatizing. It can be a harrowing experience that leaves long-term mental scars and anguish.



JOHN SCROGGS
Columnist

What if that someone were your son?

Now meet Janna Macy. She is an artist, the chairperson of the Cy-Fair High School Art Department and most importantly, she is a survivor.

On Feb. 2, 1991 she celebrated her only son's 29th birthday in a hospital, holding his hand as he struggled with yet another infection. Mark, her son, had been living for several years with AIDS. This birthday was to be his last.

Eleven days later, Mark's struggle ended. His mother wasn't that lucky. Still not fully recovered from the deaths of both of her parents within the preceding four months, her son's death seemed to be yet one more meaningless, soul-shattering catastrophe.

Macy began to develop an awareness of the society around her that shuns those infected with HIV and casts a stigma upon those living with AIDS. She realized that instead of caring for and nurturing these individuals, society

was just turning away from them.

Her son had died in a society that had rejected him.

But, she was still alive and still had to deal with losing someone so close to her. She turned to her art and began to express her feelings of pain and loss through her paintings. These works were not meant to be shown, but were a sort of catharsis, helping her to make sense out of a senseless situation.

Nearly a year later her daughter, feeling that Macy wasn't dealing well with all the loss, expressed concern over her mother's seeming lack of an emotional outlet. Macy turned to her daughter and told her that she was handling things as best she could by using her paintings as an outlet.

Up to this point, very few people had seen any of her work. Her daughter, being quite taken with the paintings, asked a friend to view some of the art and give his opinion of it. Her friend, the owner of R.E.F. Gallery in Houston, was amazed at what he saw and instantly asked Macy if she would care to have a one-person show in his gallery.

After much consideration, she decided to go ahead and let the public view her works as a sort of memorial to her son. Half of the proceeds from this first show were donated to AIDS organizations.

She also hoped that the show would serve as a reminder to people. She knew that a vast majority of people didn't think they had to worry about AIDS. She also knew those people were mistaken. Everyone is vulnerable.

While it is true that not everyone may be at risk of becoming infected, everyone is at risk of being affected. AIDS does not affect

only those who have it, but it reaches out to the families and loved ones of those infected. The pain is shared by the survivors of those who die.

Macy now hopes that an awareness can be developed that recognizes the pain families have to suffer when dealing with the crisis of AIDS.

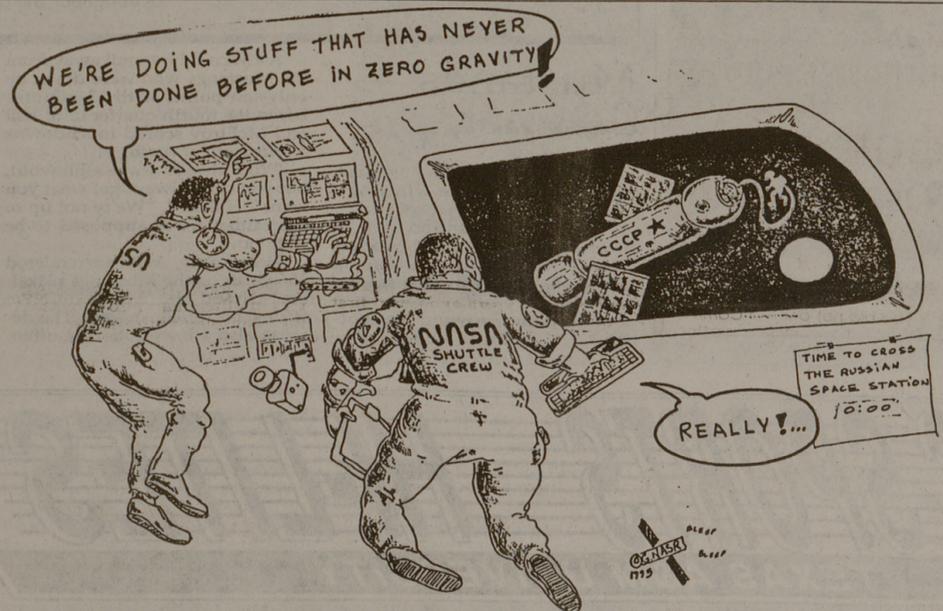
"Hopefully," she says, "if they can see the pain in my work, maybe they'll think."

Yes, and maybe they'll understand. But beware — her paintings are not for the easily offended. When I asked her to describe her style of painting, she told me she calls it "violent watercolor." She informed me that it wasn't the nice, flowery pastels that most people create with watercolors. She uses stark colors that depict dark feelings of pain and anger. Yet, through these paintings she gains strength to understand the meaning of Mark's death.

The exhibit, "Duality of Life and Death", will be showing this Monday through Friday in 120 Langford Architecture Center Building A. The gallery will be open to all, free of charge, from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

If you want to witness first-hand the power of this woman and her art, then attend the opening tonight at 7:30 p.m. Macy will be at the gallery to give an informal walk-through of the exhibit. She will discuss the meaning and origin of each painting and try to shed some light onto the deep emotions that inspired this memorial.

John Scroggs is a senior English and philosophy major



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Capital punishment neither swift nor egalitarian enough

There are certainly more sides to the capital punishment debate than the two we are accustomed to hearing about and seeing. Death penalty advocates see the criminals/murderers as receiving their "just deserts." The ultimate expression of state power over the individual: "You are not fit for this world, take your chances elsewhere." — Furman v. Georgia. Advocates also point out that executions are relatively cheap. It is certainly easier to execute the person and be done with it than house him or her in prison at thousands of dollars a day for however many odd years of incarceration. Opponents of capital punishment argue that to take life in order to honor life is hypocritical.



TRACEY JONES
Columnist

"The death penalty cannot be useful.... It seems absurd to me that the laws which are an expression of the public will, which detest and punish homicide, should themselves commit it," said Beccaria, an ancient prison rights activist.

But one important point that seems to be overlooked is the actual deterrence effect of the death penalty. Is it effective? Does it prevent numerous other murders from occurring?

The homicide rate goes up every year all across the country. Some studies have even shown the murder rates to go up in execution states the week immediately before and after an execution. So whether you are for the ultimate punishment or against it, it does not appear to be an effective deterrent to crime.

Other factors and/or "sides" are being overlooked. For instance, one murder victim's loved ones perhaps only see that justice has been achieved through the death of the murderer, but this may not be the case for other families. Perhaps this family was able to afford excellent legal counseling that secured the execution while another family in similar circumstances was not. Another factor to consider is the

criminal's background. Death is not viewed the same way by everyone. While it may seem as a punishment by the standards of the legal system, a person who feels his life is worthless and has nothing to live for will obviously not see it the same way. He may kill several times before being caught because he knows he can only die once.

If the lawbreaker knew ahead of time that punishment was certain, perhaps he would think twice about committing the crime. But the punishment would have to be immediate and certain.

Still another factor is the biased utilization of the death penalty. Limited financial resources play a role in this practice. Those who are unable to afford adequate legal counseling and are forced to rely upon court appointed attorneys are at a greater risk of receiving death sentences

— much more so than those who employ private attorneys.

The people most often forced to rely upon public defenders are blacks and other members of minority groups. Aside from poor economic situations, the race of the victim is an important consideration in death penalty cases.

Those who murder whites are much more likely to receive the death penalty than those who murder blacks. These practices have been documented in several Southern states, including Texas. Ironically, blacks are the majority of homicide victims in the United States.

With 80 percent of Americans in favor of capital punishment, it is unlikely that the practice will be banned. In fact, there is talk of making the death penalty a mandatory sentence for those who kill police officers and other peace officers.

So executions will continue to be justice for the few, while the many who favor capital punishment never receive their idea of the ultimate justice. Because capital punishment as it stands now is not an effective deterrent of crime for society at large. The system allows for too many biases, both economic and social, and too

many appeals.

If the lawbreaker knew ahead of time that some sort of punishment was certain, perhaps he would begin to think twice about committing the crime. But the punishment would have to be immediate and certain. If he is sentenced to prison, put him in prison — not probation, but a certain punishment.

The same would hold for the appeals. Allow for a smaller number of appeals and hear those promptly. When they have expired, the sentence of execution needs to be carried out immediately.

Improving the quality of court appointed lawyers and recognizing that all human life deserves to be respected would appear also to facilitate the death penalty's effectiveness. It is therefore important that the sentences be handed down as equally as possible.

Certainty, swiftness and egalitarian practices could give new meaning to the judicial system and society's concept of appropriate punishment and justice tempered with mercy.

Tracey Jones is a senior psychology major

COLLEGE STATION, TX
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MAIL CALL

Kudos to letter writer

Kudos to Kevin Weller. Homosexuality is an issue I feel strongly about. My unwavering position is that being gay is, as Weller put it, like "being brown-eyed." It is certainly not a condition in need of treatment. So, when Peter Brunone's letter appeared, a friend, who is opposed to my position, was one up on me. I certainly couldn't dispute a survey of psychiatrists. Or, so it seemed.

As an aspiring psychologist, I was surprised at what the AMA survey indicated. Thanks, Weller, for taking the initiative to investigate Brunone's claim.

For many gay men and women, the "cure" is in admitting their homosexuality. Ahs, please be kind to all mankind. Don't judge what's best for someone else. Concentrate on what's best for you.

Anne Barr
 Class of '94

'Rent a friend' shirt has basis in real life

I always thought that those shirts that said "Rent A Friend - Join A Frat" were rather crude and unfair, until last week.

A few of us were at a very good friend's house when 13 angry fraternity guys showed up at the front door at 2:00 in the morning, demanding the surrender of my friend's pledge jersey and any other items displaying their honorable letters. These guys meant business and just happened to be rather large seniors.

Anyway, they referred to de-pledging as "black-balling," whatever that means. When I spoke in defense of my friend, I was laughed at and called sexist and demoralizing names. I said he didn't de-pledge because he didn't like the fratern-

nity, he just had too many things going on: i.e. campus involvement, sports. No matter. They expressed an attitude totally opposite of the gentlemanly traits they claim to exhibit.

I don't have to mention any Greek letters or names, because you know who you are — poor excuses for Aggies. I don't see how you can hold your heads high while you wear your letters next to those of A&M on your t-shirts, caps and other Greek paraphenalia, since I now know how you really are once the "friendship rent" has been collected.

Ever heard the phrase "Worthy of the highest?" Well, you're not worthy, period — not of my friend's pledgeship, and surely not of calling yourselves Aggies. I think you lost that identity a long time ago.

Stacia Heimgartner
 Class of '96

Donated computers: For female use only?

In the Oct. 26 Campus News Briefs, one of the articles detailed donations made by Marathon Oil. One of the donations is to be used for "computer equipment for women in engineering."

I'm wondering, will signs posted above these computers read, "Male Use Unauthorized"? Or will the computers be kept in "Women Engineers Only" rooms?

I don't wish to seem unappreciative of the donation, but I can't help but comment on such a peculiar one.

Bill Hutcheson
 Class of '95