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FRANK STANFORD
Columnist

Jingle all the way ... to the cash register Merchants laugh all the way to the bank during holidays

Now that everyone's jack-o-lantern is slowly beginning to decompose into a rotting, reeking, slumping lump of pumpkin mush, the next big event on the holiday agenda is Thanksgiving, right? Well, technically, I suppose it is.

Although Thanksgiving is a "biggie" at A&M because of huge meals at home and/or the t.u. game, it just doesn't create the spending frenzy that Halloween or even Easter promotes. Just like the motels in the area count on football season to make it through the year, certain holidays really boost the income of many retail and even grocery stores.

Each year, in anticipation of the spookiest day, the grocery stores stockpile and sell many thousands of dollars in costumes, pumpkins, candy and beer to cash in on the Halloween spirit. Likewise, Easter baskets, artificial grass and chocolate bunnies line the aisles a few weeks before Easter.

And even though Labor Day isn't as big a spending weekend as you might think, ice chests, beer and soda sales must at least quadruple their normal volume. The other holidays, however, are basically tame. That is, until the "big one."

Retail stores try to hang with these minor holidays through special sales, appropriate decoration and seasonal fashion changes such holidays seem to kick off. And because

"turkey day" is centered around gratitude instead of giving, there really is no rush on retail or grocery stores for Thanksgiving.

Albertson's and Apple Tree might fill up the turkey refrigerator case, stuck up on a few staple dinner items and put pilgrim hats on the checkout personnel, but retailers just sit and wait for the big one. The really, really big one. And it's just around the economic corner.

Christmas is — as we all know — the biggest, mostest, spendiest holiday of them all. The stores know it too, and they're already preparing. A former department store clerk once told me his employer grosses 70 to 80 percent of its annual sales in November and December.

Catalog retailers are starting to mail out the Christmas editions, if they haven't already. And department and discount stores are dragging out the plastic trees and pine cone wreaths, all to get us in the spending ... uh, I mean Christmas spirit.

In the next few weeks, we will all be inundated with everything that could possibly be associated with Christmas. Dolly Parton's Country Christmas CD is already being marketed on late night television, along with every Ronco product you can imagine.

Because we are so centered on presents as children, the tendency to associate Christmas with material things continues to plague us into adulthood. Of course, the toys get bigger and more expensive — or perhaps more money for clothes or school is given — but it's even the most basic Christmas tangibles that continue to cloud the true meaning of the day.

From the time we're old enough to toddle, Christmas means Santa Claus, Jesus, egg nog, the North Pole, wise men and lit-up

trees. And presents, lots of presents. And let's not forget to mention enormous fuzzy stockings, flying reindeer with possibly electric noses, frankincense and oodles of myrrh, whatever that is.

With all of this mass confusion and conflict of stories, just what on earth is a child in this society supposed to believe? It's no wonder that the holiday season has become synonymous with commercialism and suicide rates.

I was recently traipsing around this new Wal-Mart and was stunned to see the tremendous volume of Christmas claptrap crammed on the shelves. Every stuffed animal you can imagine was wrapped in Santa or Elf duds and staring back at me with their little \$17.99 name tags. When did polar bears become a symbol of Christmas? Most kids have a difficult enough time separating the Jesus and Santa thing.

Nearly everyone is familiar with the story of the birth of Christ, but where do St. Nicholas, Rudolph, Kris Kringle, mistletoe and trees join the picture? And if the obese reindeer exploiter in the red suit has nothing to do with Christianity, why don't other religions celebrate the tale of Santa? As for trees, I'm told they come from the ancient Druids as symbols of life. The Druids also built Stonehenge; how irrelevantly fascinating.

The holiday season has gotten way out of hand because it has so many meanings to grasp and debts to pay. Regardless of how you view Dec. 25, one can be certain of what it means to the merchants. Commercialism at Christmas will continue to increase, and there is no end in sight.

Frank Stanford is a graduate philosophy student

EDITORIAL Hear no evil

Speaker approval wrong idea

MSC officials have decided they know what is best for students to hear. They want to approve the speakers at student functions.

According to MSC President Heather Hartman, student organizations planning a program could affect "the whole campus" must get the speakers approved by Student Services.

MSC officials feel that both sides of an issue should always be represented.

"There is a certain environment the University expects to be maintained," said Kevin Wilson, associate director of programs.

Clearly something is amiss. The University's purpose is to provide students with a wide range of programs from which to learn, not to provide censorship.

According to University regulations, student organizations who would like a speaker to address non-members in addition to members must obtain approval from the director of student services and sometimes the MSC director.

Why any approval is necessary from these people is unclear. As long as an organiza-

tion does not receive funding from the University, it should not matter who its speakers are, regardless of whether or not A&M supports their opinion.

Apparently, the whole purpose behind regulating potentially biased speakers is to bring in another speaker with the opposite viewpoint to provide a balance.

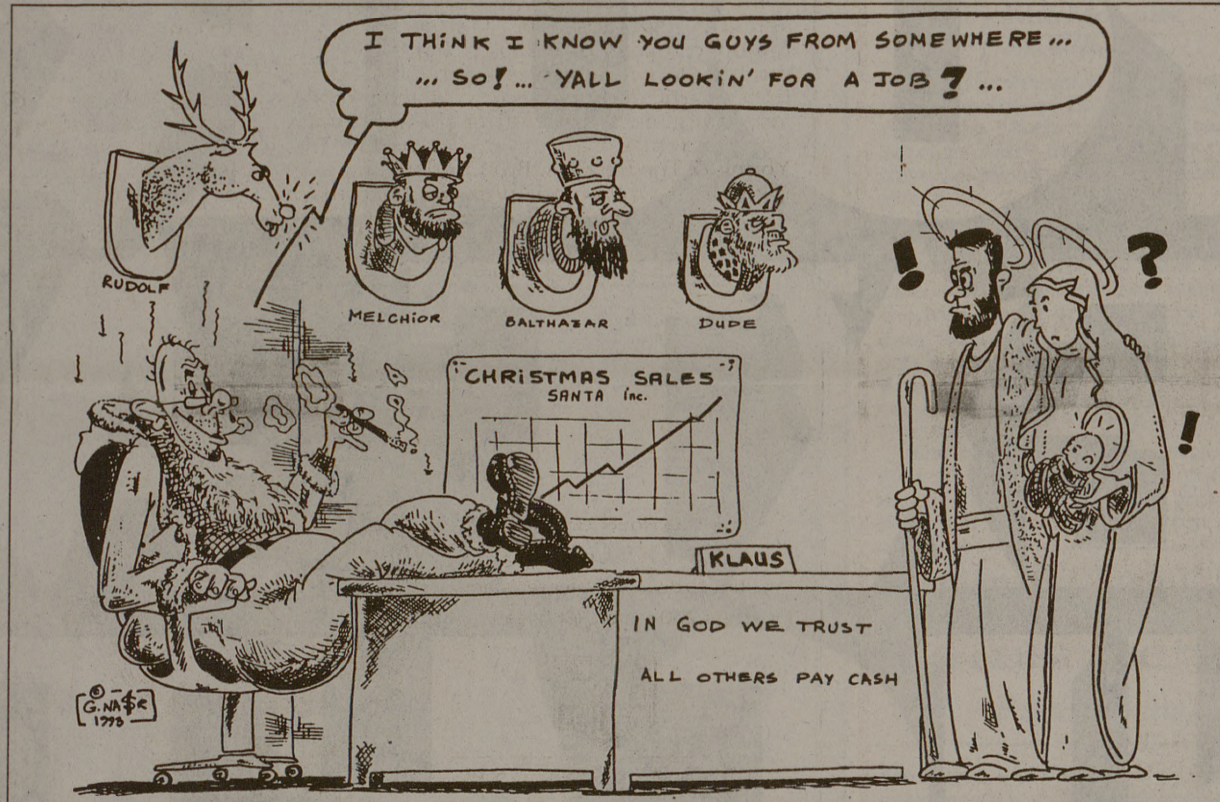
College Republicans adviser Richard Stadelmann pointed out that major political speakers often don't like to appear in a program in which they'll be speaking against lesser-known candidates.

This means that students will be missing out on hearing a major speaker's opinion just because another major speaker with the opposite opinion cannot appear at the same time.

Obviously, the whole idea is silly. Students have a right to hear one side of an issue if they want, and it can't hurt A&M's reputation if it's not a University-sponsored event.

As long as Texas A&M is not footing the bill, student groups should be allowed to bring in anyone they desire.

Even if it is someone "controversial."



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College Republicans offer alternative multicultural solutions

On June 9, 1993 the Liberal Arts Council at Texas A&M passed a six-year multicultural agreement. After 10 years of research by the Committee for Multicultural Diversity developed a multicultural program for students within liberal arts curriculum. This requirement has been the model for a current university-wide multicultural course requirement proposal before the Faculty Senate. The purpose of these proposed solutions is to find an equitable solution to the multicultural debate by providing a viable alternative which will satisfy all parties concerned. Contained within this proposal are alternative solutions to the multicultural requirement which provide students a balanced multicultural experience. It is our position that political indo-

ctrination is not a legitimate function of higher education. While we agree that all contributions of all Americans should be documented and celebrated we feel that these classes may become pulpits of liberal indoctrination and courses in political correctness.

Furthermore, there is no significant evidence to support the theory that multicultural course requirements promote racial harmony and mutual understanding. We therefore believe that this requirement and any subsequent requirements should be rescinded and replaced with a more equitable alternative they may achieve the mutually desired goal of racial harmony.

The following are three proposed solutions which are augmented with a special project proposal which may be utilized singularly or in concert with each other. These solutions have been developed in order to best utilize the current resources of Texas A&M University, and address the real issues behind the demand for cultural awareness.

• Solution One: Professors teaching core curriculum classes such as English, history, social studies and humanities requirements would be granted University authority and encouraged to offer students extra credit to

attend and participate in MSC multicultural seminars and workshops.

These seminars are presented by Multicultural Student Services Department, International Student Services, various minority service groups, etc. Students are already required to pay student fees for such organizations and activities. Plus, Texas A&M could help sponsor these events and demonstrate Texas A&M's

There is no significant evidence to support the theory that multicultural course requirements promote racial harmony and mutual understanding.

commitment to equitable education.

• Solution Two: The Department of History should convene a conference to address the issue of minority contributions to United States history. The main concern within the current curriculum is that the contributions of minority Americans is not accurately documented nor celebrated. The conference should consider ways

in which to format the U.S. History classes so as to shed light on significant contributions made by all Americans for all Americans. Historical figures like Booker T. Washington, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Caesar Chavez and other prominent minority members deserve far more attention than they are currently granted.

• Solution Three: At present, all students at Texas A&M University are required to take at least six hours of humanities courses. Most students are not particularly set in the classes they choose. Academic advisors should encourage students who are undecided on the humanities requirement to take classes which are designated to be multicultural.

It has been reported that 61 percent of the student body already fulfills both aspects of the proposed multicultural course requirement. This solution could be utilized to advise the remaining 39 percent to take these classes as their humanities requirement. Students can further work with their academic advisor to discuss certain areas of interest within the wide spectrum of multicultural courses.

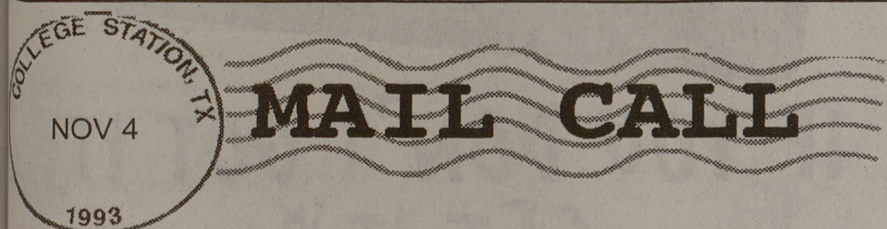
• Special Project Proposal: We believe a statue or the naming of a building should be reserved to honor one of the

black founders of Texas A&M. Black Republican State Senator Matthew Gaines was very supportive and instrumental in the founding of Texas A&M. Research has already begun on this project and there has been a significant amount of support within the black community.

We realize that this proposal may not satisfy all the demands of both sides of the issue. However, we believe that for a topic as controversial and emotional as this there must come a time for compromise. Extreme liberals may argue that this proposal does not go far enough while extreme conservatives may argue that this proposal goes too far.

We must all agree that promoting racial harmony and accepting cultural diversity is key not only to our national security but also our economic stability. Texas A&M has an opportunity to become a national leader in a debate that has divided administrators, faculty, students and alumni. We can either move forward or remain static in divisiveness.

This proposal was developed by Jody L. Withers and Keith Kouba in cooperation with the Texas A&M College Republicans.



Know privatization facts before writing

I am writing in response to the Mail letter written by Keith Stubbs about the actions taken against three Food Ser-

vice employees. First of all, I would like to remind Mr. Stubbs what a democracy is. A democracy is where everyone has a voice and not just those in power.

For you to say that someone should never be able to work anywhere again because they had an opinion different than your own makes you the most nar-

row-minded, radical fool I have ever heard of.

I've worked for Food Services for a year and a half, and I was acquainted with all three men. Aghs, it really pisses me off to see three good people lose their jobs because they did not conform.

It also disgusts me to read a letter from a student ranting and raving about the benefits of privatization when he obviously does not know the facts. I would just like to challenge all of you to become informed about the consequences of privatization before writing into the Battalion and making an idiot out of yourself.

Michael Wayne Tinsley
Class of '93

Annoying car alarm disrupts Silver Taps

I do not know to whom I am writing this letter, but whoever you are, please consider my request. Since the beginning of this semester, my roommate and I have endured the sound of an annoying car alarm that goes off almost every day.

I live in Lechner Hall, and I assume this vehicle is parked in the lot adjacent to Lechner. The alarm runs through about six different sounds, and goes off from one to four times a day.

I would not be complaining, except that on Tuesday night during Silver

Taps, the alarm went off four different times. Although I did not attend Silver Taps, I was going to observe the ceremony by turning off the lights in my room and reflecting on the meaning of Silver Taps.

The incessant noise of the car alarm rendered it impossible for me to concentrate or focus my thoughts on any subject.

I would greatly appreciate it if the owner of this vehicle would shut the alarm off as soon as possible. If anyone is setting the alarm off purposely, please refrain from doing this. Thank you.

JoVan Currie
Class of '97