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OPINION

Thursday, November 11, 1993

THE BATTALION

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THE BATTALION Editorial Board

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When a dog is more than just a dog Sometimes we forget the meaning behind the symbol

I must confess I was a little concerned over the health problems of our papal pooch last week and it got me thinking about how people give special meanings to otherwise ordinary entities.



FRANK STANFORD
Columnist

I have never been the type of guy to be overly concerned about his college mascot; but as a freshman in the Corps during Reveille's first year, her presence inspired me. She was the most famous image of Texas A&M, and I connected with her. We all connected with a dog.

Being in college for the first time, a fish in the Corps and a little brainwashed as a result, I accepted this dog as one of reverence — not to mention higher ranking. It was a charge to walk past her on the quad, just seeing her bark at games gave me a sense of pride and the feeling of Aggie spirit. All of that emotion came from a dog.

After my first year, however, she sort of slipped into the image of a regular dog — a gorgeous dog with a title, mind you — but a dog nonetheless. I decided the emotion must have come from me; the yap-happy pup was only a symbol and oblivious to her own impact.

Reveille is certainly a special canine to many of us here at A&M for obvious reasons. She is the symbolic representation of the wayward mutt some cadets ran over and

nursed back to health in the 1930s. She's also of a beautiful, personable breed and impeccably trained. Of foremost importance however, Reveille is an idol for a certain bunch of people. A demidog if you will.

If we delve into the workings of our cultures — be they Aggie, national, racial or religious — we find ourselves idolizing all sorts of ordinarily insignificant beings. Not only is it the nature of humanity to deeply love symbols, but all too often we allow these symbols to actually become the meanings in and of themselves.

For instance, in the recent past there was an enormous hubbub over the issue of flag-burning as a desecration of America. Hogwash. Unless it is someone else's property, a flag is just a symbol — a symbol of shed blood, freedom of conviction and unity. Certainly those who fought and died for the ideologies of America are worthy of the utmost reverence; however, a burning sheet of nylon, cotton and ink is just that. The remembrance of sacrifice and ideologies lives on permanently and unscathed.

We have all seen and owned numerous objects with our national symbol displayed. Sweatbands, checkbooks, bumper stickers and even panties have all been widely used to promote our national symbol. And even though they are similarly constructed of nylon, cotton and ink, surely no one would object to burning a pair of "patriotic" panties.

Colors are an excellent example of unsubstantiated symbolism as well and exist as such in every culture of the world. The most prominent examples are those of black and white. Just try to imagine the Lone Ranger in black, with a black beard and riding on a

black horse. He rescues a black woman in a black dress held hostage by a blond man with a white hat, a white horse and white clothes — who answers to "Whitey." Fat chance.

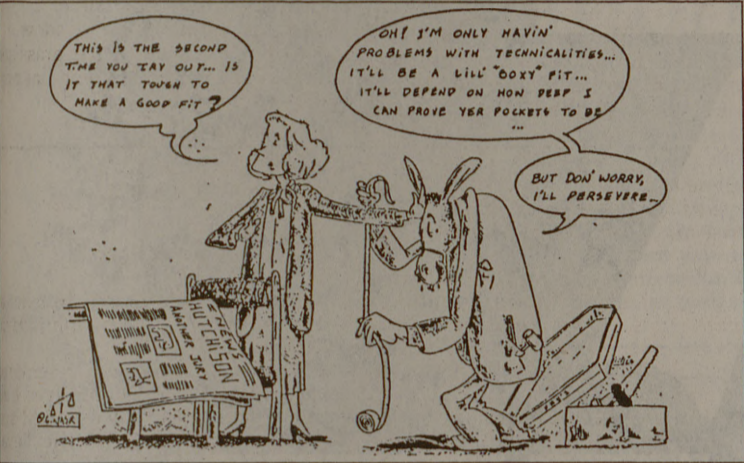
As evident in a traditional wedding dress, the color white has been associated with purity and goodness for centuries and black as a symbol of filth, evil or remorse. The examples are endless. It's no wonder the African race has always struggled for equality in Caucasian cultures.

Likewise, a tight-fitting red dress worn in China exudes happiness and festivity and is proudly worn in weddings as well. The same dress in other cultures is one of harlots, or at the very least connotes sexual enticement. Red lights or lanterns are also viewed in much the same fashion. Although it's the same Lone Ranger, the same flesh, the same dress and the same bulb, they radically change meaning based solely on symbolism.

Unlike the Native Americans who glorify life-giving rain, or the Shinto religion's worship of fertility, most symbols have only the significance of what people give them. Any innate value of a symbol can only be the use of its material make-up, or in the case of an animal, its very life. Because symbolism can be both negative and positive at the same time, it's helpful to know of a symbol's origin, and equally important to be aware of the actual intent.

As for Reveille and her timely retirement, I wish her well in doggie Leisure-Land. I just hope she never reads this.

Frank Stanford is a graduate philosophy student



EDITORIAL Hall harassment Sometimes traditions go too far

Although tradition is part of what makes Texas A&M great, some people carry it too far.

Bonfire enthusiasts have repeatedly harassed a resident of Aston Hall after he wrote a letter to The Battalion complaining about the excessive noise made in his hall early on weekend mornings to wake people up for cut.

Chad White has received threatening phone calls, a penitentiary drawn in shaving cream on his door and a cup of urine left outside his room. These kind of tactics must stop. Apparently, there has been no punishment at all for the perpetrators although the victim is clearly in the right.

The Residence Hall Handbook states that "use of excessive force in the hallways to wake up Bonfire participants is not permitted. These methods include, but are not limited to, banging axe handles on doors, loud stereo, air horns, chain saws, etc."

In spite of this regulation, yellow pots and crew chiefs continue to yell and bang on students' doors for up to 30 minutes, starting at 6 a.m.

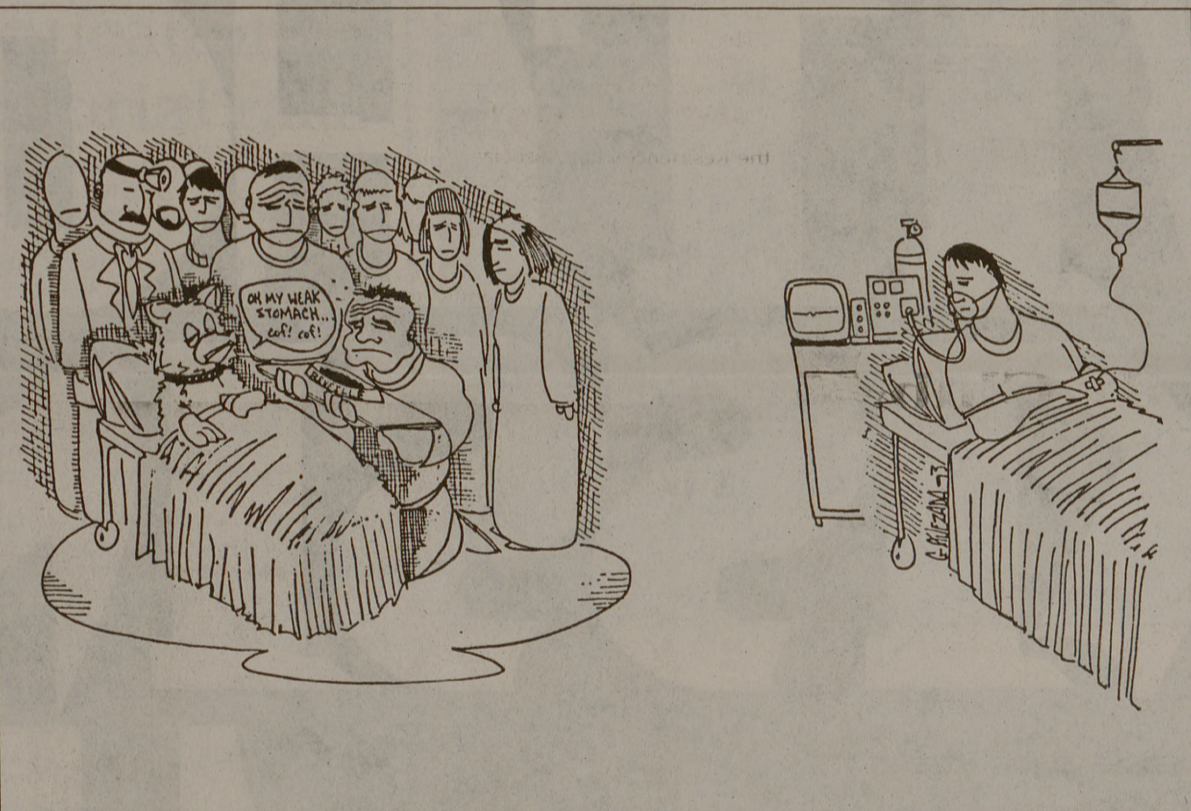
It seems hall officials permit these practices as long as no one speaks out against them.

Rusty Thompson, advisor for the yellow pots and coordinator of Residence Life for Northside, said he has received no complaints. He admitted, however, that people are probably hesitant to say anything. Considering what White has been through, this is not surprising.

Bonfire is supposed to be about developing fellowship between Aggies. But it's hard to build camaraderie by yelling at students to help build Bonfire and attempting to intimidate them when they don't.

"The intention behind the wake-up calls is to get people excited," said Thompson, "but a lot of people are getting turned off, and this is creating a negative impression of Bonfire."

With all of the focus on A&M right now, it's important to show off the positive aspects of traditions here — especially Bonfire. Incidents of harassment should never occur. They are an embarrassment to the University and everyone associated with it.



Editorials appearing in The Battalion reflect the views of the editorial board. They do not necessarily reflect the opinions of other Battalion staff members, the Texas A&M student body, regents, administration, faculty or staff.

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

The Battalion encourages letters to the editor and will print as many as space allows. Letters must be 300 words or less and include the author's name, class, and phone number.

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

Contact the opinion editor for information on submitting guest columns.

Address letters to:
The Battalion - Mail Call
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Mail stop 1111
Texas A&M University
College Station, TX 77843
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COLLEGE STATION, TX NOV 11 1993 MAIL CALL

Remember veterans

Please take the time on this veterans' day to remember the millions of U.S. servicemen and thousands of Aggies who have served in wars and have given the ultimate sacrifice to protect our freedom.

Shane Hemby
Class of '97

A side note — those French and Danes who collaborated with the Nazis were shaved and paraded through the streets. Many were later beaten and killed.

Niels Oldenburg
Class of '93

French did fight back against Nazi invaders

Robert Vasquez needs to take more European World War II history classes, especially pre-World War II. "They (the French) should have resisted."

Well, they did. Rather than face one of the most devastating armies of the century, the French citizens chose to perform sabotage with "the French Underground" or the resistance. This resistance gave the Allies much-needed information for the later defeat of the Third Reich.

Denmark chose to be open during the war. Did this mean that they gave in, too? No! Overnight the Danish underground moved over 5,000 Jews in small Danish fishing vessels to neutral Sweden. Who helped in this courageous feat, facing certain death if captured? The prince of Denmark. Sure, he let the Germans in, but in public he openly defied the Nazis by riding his bicycle instead of riding in a Nazi Mercedes.

Those you think rolled over and played dead happened to inflict more pain to the Germans by passive resistance rather than mass suicide!

Multiculturalism will mean opportunities

Texas A&M University is on its way to international prominence. Many of you have heard that A&M is already a world class university, and in many respects this is true. Monday afternoon, however, the Faculty Senate opened new doors and possibly created many new opportunities for the students of Texas A&M University. The passage of the multiculturalism proposal and institution of a multicultural curricula will only have positive ramifications for students and the university community.

At a commencement ceremony this past spring, Vanessa Gilmore, chairman of the board of directors for the Texas Department of Commerce, stressed the imperative nature of a graduate's ability to "think globally and act locally."

This multicultural proposal will afford future graduates the opportunity to do just that. In a society as diverse and ever-changing as ours — with a vast number of international opportunities — it is of ultimate importance that we distance ourselves from other graduates when it comes to international relations. A study in multiculturalism will greatly span that distance.

While the ramifications of this proposal

seem negative, it is important that we keep things in perspective. That perspective being that we, as Aggies, will conquer the negativism created by this situation and continue to achieve "locally" and "globally" as we always have. Only now with a better understanding of our publics. Gig 'em, Ags!

Raymond Boney
Class of '96

'World class' school must think globally

This is my first letter ever written to Mail Call, and I'm glad it is my first. The

MSC doesn't fund student groups

As with much of the information coming out regarding the role of the Memorial Student Center relative to University policy, the information Frank Brown presented Nov. 10 regarding the source of funds to certain groups is totally inaccurate.

The Department of Student Activities grants money, through an application process, to the organizations mentioned in Brown's letter.

The MSC does not allocate money to student organizations as Mr. Brown would have you believe. However, the MSC L.T. Jordan Institute for International Awareness, through its Enrichment Fund (which comes from an endowment), grants funds to student organizations and academic departments for international programs through a competitive process.

Heather M. Hartman
MSC President
Class of '93

MSC speaker policy meant to open students' minds

I am writing in response to the two letters written by Curtis Neason and Jennifer L. Hollingsworth concerning a MSC council

topic I wish to address is Mark McElwain's open letter to Dr. Gage, encouraging Dr. Gage to vote "Ag" on the Faculty Senate's proposal for multicultural classes here at good-old-boy Texas A&M University.

In his letter, Mr. McElwain makes the correlation of why taking multicultural classes would not affect getting a job with IBM. Obviously, Mr. McElwain knows nothing about IBM, because if he did then he would know that IBM is a multinational company with offices in many different cultures. IBM strives and expects its employees to be aware of the many different cultures that exist in the business world.

Mr. McElwain also makes the point that all of America's history is taken in History 105 and History 106, again Mr.

McElwain demonstrates an ignorance that is found in some people that are of Anglo-Saxon background. When I took History 105 and History 106 here at good-old-boy Texas A&M University, not once was the name George Washington Carver mentioned. If you don't know who this person is, just remember the peanut butter and jelly sandwich that you ate the other day.

One thing I do agree with Mr. McElwain, is yes, Dr. Gage is responsible for the student's history. In fact ALL students' history whether they be white, black, brown or yellow. If Texas A&M University is going to be a "World Class" University then it must understand the world in which it exists.

Robert Raglin
College Station

speaker policy that they feel violates the First Amendment rights to speak freely and to peacefully assemble. It is nice to know that Curtis and Jennifer are concerned with "the other education" here at Texas A&M University, but perhaps they are forgetting the main reason that the majority of the student body is enrolled here at Texas A&M: to receive an academic education.

This education is one of objectiveness, whether it be in forest science, civil engineering, economics, political science, etc. Jennifer, why would the College Republicans want to have a controversial speaker in the MSC if it wasn't for political reasons? Curtis, why would Oliver North and Dan Quayle speak here if there wasn't an underlying political motive?

College Republicans, I am not trying to attack your organization. If members of Aggie Democrats or another political group had written similar letters, the would be questioned by me in the same manner. Perhaps it is time for some students to spend more time observing society and less time trying to inflict their subjective political views upon the student body.

Unfortunately, most students at A&M choose not to broaden their education, but rather to minimize it to meet their own beliefs. Thus, when the University attempts to make students open their minds (multiculturalism), it meets stiff resistance. So, Curtis, Jennifer and anyone else with narrow views, please, open your minds.

Matt M. Murphy
Class of '96

