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## Reading billboards on freeway of love Ads, television provide impersonal ways to meet people

Houston freeways have always been famous for their traffic. But, lately traffic problems have taken a backseat to a different kind of roadside attraction — billboards.



JENNY MAGEE  
 Columnist

A recent trend in Houston is attempting to turn billboards into a drive-by classified page. Several Houstonians have transcended the boundary of consumer advertising, and have utilized freeway signs to advertise personal matters to fellow motorists. These ads are not typical billboard advertisements hoping to entice a hungry driver to pull over for a \$4.99 buffet. These ads were bought by people who are trying to sell things like marriage and parenthood. It seems that it has become acceptable to air the most personal of matters with the aid of a mass communication medium.

My gut reaction was outrage. Demoralizing the gift of motherhood to a nine word, three line advertisement is disgusting to say the least. But, this woman is reacting to the society that she lives in. She is taking a walk through a tunnel that has already been dug. The infrastructure of a society that held the desire to keep personal lives personal has long since been eroded.

Personal ads, "Studs," sperm banks, dating services and "The Love Connection," are just a few examples of the depersonalization of love, marriage and child-bearing. I have often wondered why people use dating services and personal ads to find a mate. What could possibly be the appeal of searching for a mate in a similar manner that you would order from a fast food menu? "Well, I'm really trying to cut back on blondes this month; maybe I should go for the red-head this time."

It is very easy for the majority of us to sit in the security of college life, surrounded by 20,000 members of the opposite sex, and laugh at the poor souls who turn to the newspaper to find a date. But, as a recent A&M graduate has shared with me, things are a little bit different when suddenly everyone around from nine to five is old enough to be a parent. In and of themselves, personal ads are probably pretty harmless. Maybe they actually help people find compatible mates. But, unfortunately, personal ads were the springboard that enabled people to put their personal lives on billboards next to the freeway.

Now it seems that these innovative young Romeoos have been copied by an enterprising mother. An anonymous Houston woman hoping to finance her Ph.D. rented a billboard on the Southwest Freeway offering the ser-

More than likely, if a person advertises in the

Jenny Magee is a sophomore English and journalism major



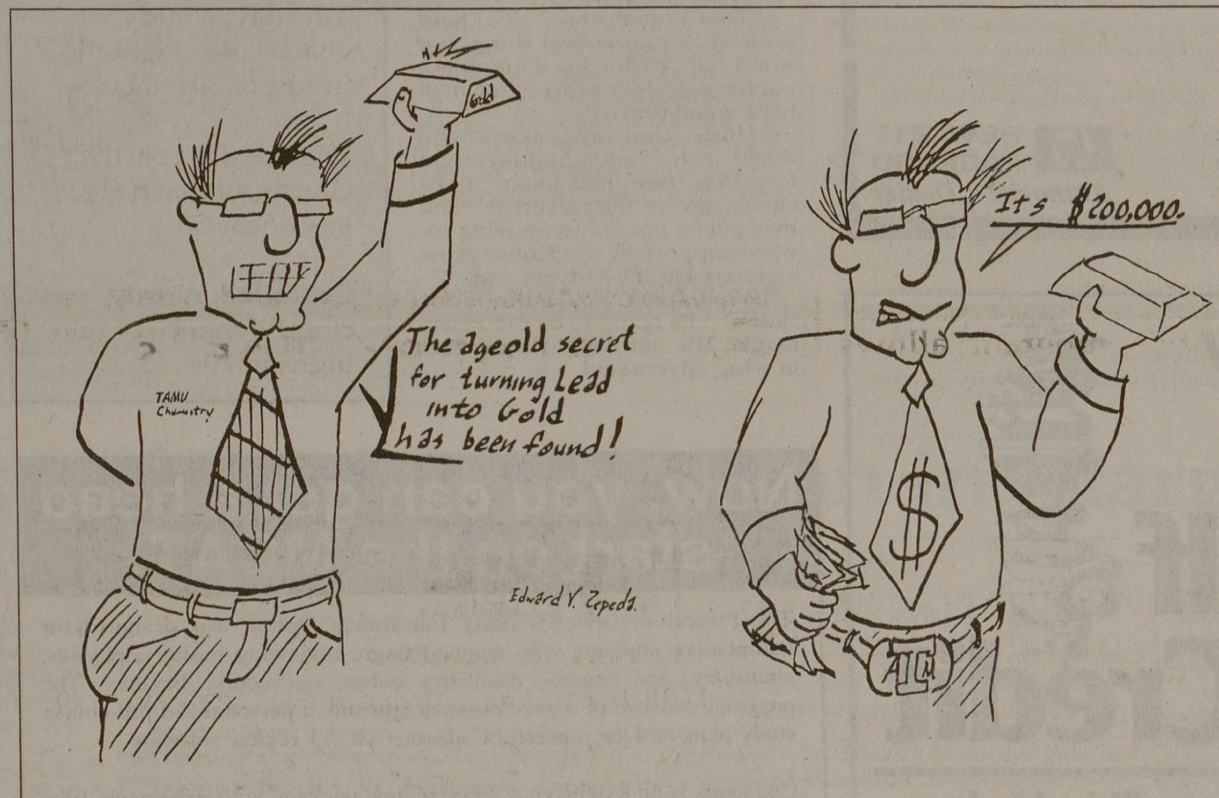
## EDITORIAL

### World class?

#### A&M must rethink its goals

The Texas A&M University administration needs to seriously reexamine its priorities for running this institution. This University should focus on educating its students — everything else should take a back seat. However, these concerns seem to be far from the thoughts of an administration obsessed with world-class public relations images. The dream of a world-class reputation permeates every level of this school. While long-term plans for the Bush Library and other major projects dominate administrative agendas, the real business of the University stands ignored. Why do administrators seem to require a lawsuit, scandal or investigation before recognizing the need for change or improvement? Several such problems have already occurred this semester. Allegations of new NCAA violations implicated football players, the Athletic Department and the Twelfth Man Foundation. The Texas Rangers investigated charges that the chairman of the Board of Regents personally benefited from University

business deals with Barnes and Noble Bookstores, Inc. The dismissal of highly regarded Food Services officials after they opposed plans to privatize the Sbisia Underground led to fears of a University cover-up. The Capital Campaign has raised over \$300 million for the Development Foundation, but none of this money seems to be channeled to take up the slack from serious budget cuts. Evans Library routinely cuts services, reduces its hours, and drops periodical subscriptions in order to make ends meet. As the University rapidly expands toward West Campus, no one can offer a tangible transportation plan to get students out to the new facilities. The new president of Texas A&M must be ready to fix this situation. Many of the University's current difficulties might not have happened if certain areas had received proper priority in the first place. A world-class reputation is an admirable goal, but Texas A&M will never reach that status if it keeps refusing to take care of today's chores before planning tomorrow's praise.



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## Eight miles high: Fear of flying makes plane trip interesting

By the time you read this column, I'll either be in Paris or lying at the bottom of the ocean, my body turgid with salt water, rapidly deteriorating beneath the weight of millions of gallons of water amidst the ruins of a tragic plane crash that sent hundreds of innocent passengers to their early and untimely deaths. No, I'm not nervous about my plane flight. I'm informed that at least one in six flights crossing the Atlantic actually makes it there safely, so what do I have to worry about? By now, you may know that 25 Aggie students are traveling to France as part of the Rudder Normandy Scholars program.



ROBERT VASQUEZ  
 Columnist

Having bribed one teacher and hitting the others over the head with a large, blunt object (my ex-girlfriend), I was accepted to participate in the program. Each year, the Rudder Normandy Scholars program teaches students about the causes of World War II and its effects, with a particular emphasis on France. After studying World War II history during the first half of the semester, the students then travel to France for the second half to visit the sites they learned about during the first half. Sort of like the field trips you took in second grade. Except this one lasts for a month. In another country. Across the ocean. "Now, class," the teacher might say. "Don't forget to bring your notes from your parents, or else you won't be able to go with us to France. You'll need money for lunch because we'll probably stop at a French cafe with ... Jean-Luc! Make sure your mom packs a jacket, a toothbrush and a life preserver." I've never needed a life preserver for a field trip before. Although, one time,

Miss Mayhew made us bring swim trunks for a party we had at a pool. I made a trip home this weekend to see my family one last time. My sister was especially nice and wanted to let me know how much she would miss me: SWEET SISTER: Rob, I'm glad we were able to see you before your big trip. We're suspended 40,000 feet above circling sharks, and the maintenance crew who repaired our plane is spinning a stray propeller they found on the hangar floor. PARANOID COLUMNIST: Well, I figured it would be nice to talk to you. Before I plunge into the Atlantic, I mean. SWEET SISTER: Rob! Don't say that. That's not funny. PARANOID COLUMNIST: Well, you never know when your number's up.

This could be it. GREEDY OPPORTUNIST: Oh, Well, then, can I have your car? I mean, if anything happens. INCENSED BROTHER: What? COLD HEARTED SNAKE: You know, just in case ... My friends at The Battalion were much more encouraging. I mentioned to them the possibility of my body finding its resting place on the ocean floor. "Not a chance," they said. "Your body would never make it that far. Those sharks and scavengers would have your flesh picked off the bone before you reached twenty feet." I looked at them, watching for a smile, hoping they were joking. "They'd leave your bones shiny, though. Cleaner than a stick from a county fair corn dog." Very nice. All the joking left me rattled, so I went home to escape the fear welling up within me. I was flying Air France. They've been in the business for years. Surely, they were reliable.

Once home, I turned on CNN. "... And in world news, Air France is on strike again. Angry union workers struggle to reach an agreement while domestic flights are delayed. International flights, however, will continue as scheduled." Great. We're suspended 40,000 feet above circling sharks, and the maintenance crew who repaired our plane is spinning a stray propeller they found on the hangar floor. I guess I'll be all right. The opportunity to study in France has been long in coming. I'm willing to suppress my intense fear of flying and my intense fear of heights and my intense fear of bad tray food for the great opportunity that has been granted me. After all, it's only an 11 hour flight. 660 minutes. 39,600 seconds. I will bravely step onto that plane, walk down the aisle, and take my seat like any sensible man. I just hope my claustrophobia doesn't act up. Robert Vasquez is a senior journalism major

COLLEGE STATION, TX  
 NOV 16  
 1993  
**MAIL CALL**

### Ring policy unfair to transfer students

The new ring policy, approved by the Board of Directors of the Association of Former Students, increasing the undergraduate residence requirement to get your Aggie ring from 30 credit hours to 60 hours is an outrage. Many Aggies will be denied the same privileges as their fellow

Aggies. For example, before the rule change, I would have been able to order my ring after the spring semester, but now I have to wait until the semester I graduate. I will be denied the tradition of Ring Dance and will not get to wear a ring my last year because I am a transfer student. I worked for years while attending junior college just to save up enough money to attend A&M. When I finally reach my goal, how am I rewarded? They take part of what it means to be

an Aggie away from me. Am I less of an Aggie because I am a transfer student? What's next, will they make us wear a scarlet T on our clothes? Porter Garner, associate director for Alumni Programs said, "All the board is trying to do is make sure the Aggie wearing that ring fully understands what it means to wear that ring." Most transfer students I know worked very hard to become an Aggie and are very much aware of what it means to be one. Garner said he talked to a lot of students about the new policies and could not find one who disagreed with it. He obviously didn't talk to me or other transfer students who make up a good portion of the student body. All Aggies, please do not let this great injustice continue. Danny Cox Class of '94

### Brady Bill won't keep guns from criminals

In response to Brian Stucker's letter of Nov. 12: First, a militia is not the police. A militia is a citizens' organization formed for the defense in times of emergency. If America were invaded or if there was a coup of the government, citizens would band together in militias for defense, thus aiding the army. This is a formidable threat considering Americans own 200 million guns. This fact also ensures that civilians keep control over the military, unlike many countries where the military often takes power. Second, the Brady Bill's waiting period will do nothing to keep guns from criminals. Currently, five out of six handguns

used in crime are acquired through means other than the retailers who will have to enforce the wait. The remaining one sixth will either be obtained the same way as these, or they can still be purchased from a retailer since the Brady Bill does not mandate a background check. This is left up to the states, and many states simply cannot afford to set up a background check. What I would like to see is a nationwide automated system like the one in Virginia: the check is conducted over the phone in about five minutes. Also, Washington, D.C. and New York City have the toughest gun control laws in the U.S., and they have the highest crime rates — proof that gun control does not work. David R. Webb Class of '93