

THE BATTALION Editorial Board

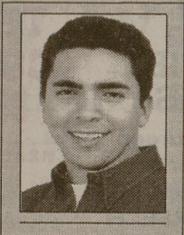
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'When I give my best, you be there' Regular call home turns poignant when life is threatened

This morning I called home, a ritual I try to observe at least once a week.



ROBERT VASQUEZ
Columnist

The call usually begins with the simple intent of saying "Hello," soliciting money and then "Goodbye." But then I always begin talking with my mother. And she fills me in on who's getting married, why my little brother needs to grow up, and who died recently. Someone's always dying.

One hour later, I'll be saying goodbye; my mother apologizing for talking so long. "That's OK, Mom," I'll say. "It's been good talking to you."

"Same here," she'll say. "We're very proud of you."
"Thank you, Mom."

My mom always tells me she's proud of me. Both she and my father are convinced that, no matter what I choose to pursue in life, I will succeed. It's kind of nice, really. No matter what awards I win, no matter what opportunities I manage to screw up, no one seems to believe in me like they do, not even I.

"I love you, Rob," she'll say.
"I love you, too, Mom," I'll say, hanging up the phone.
My poor mother. It seems she's worked all her life to provide a better one for her

children. Though she was a National Merit Scholar in high school, her father refused to send her to college. Why did she need a college education, he asked, only to get married?

My mother made sure not to make the same mistake with her children. From kindergarten through high school, my mother made our education her priority. And school was only a part of that education. Home was no refuge from learning. Memories of my childhood are colored with relentless corrections from my mother.

"Mom, look what happened to him and I."
"Look what happened to him and 'me.'"
"It was her, Mom."
"It was 'she.'"

When I called home this morning, my brother told me that my mother had been admitted to the hospital. I called to the hospital.

"Your mother has been having chest pains," my father told me. "She came in last night to see a doctor. After a few tests, they told her she should stay here for the night and continue testing in the morning. We didn't want to call and alarm you; it's only testing, but the doctor says it's risky. She's going in for diagnostic surgery soon. You can talk to her for a little bit."

I sat in silence, stunned, while he handed her the phone. Could it really be that serious? There had been no warning. And then I remembered how her father had died suddenly of a heart attack.

"Hello?"
"Hi, Mom. How do you feel?"
"I'm OK," she said in a normal, almost

cheerful voice. "I want you to pray for me." The words sounded strange coming from her. All my life, it was my mother people ran to when they needed something. I never thought that she might need something for herself.

"Of course, Mom." Questions jumbled in my head. "Do you know what's wrong?"
"No." She was silent for a minute.

"They're coming to get me soon. For testing. Rob, I want you to know that I love you. And if I don't see you again..." Suddenly there was a smile in her voice. A smile she was forcing to hide something. "If I don't see you again... give it your best."

If I don't see you again. If I don't see you again — these words were coming from my mother. "Give it your best," she said.

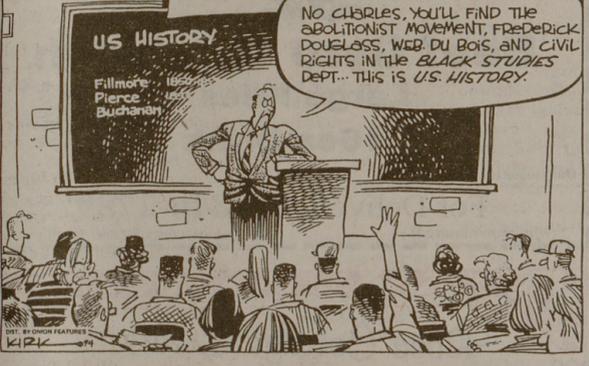
The words echoed in my mind. I wondered if those words would haunt me for the rest of my life. When I interviewed for a job, would I remember those words, "Give it your best." In three months I would be walking across the platform to receive my degree. Would I hear those words then? All my life, she had worked for that moment. Had she come this far only to miss it by three months?

"Why do you say that, Mom?" I asked, suddenly angry. And sad. And torn.
"When I give it my best, Mom, I want you to be there."

There was silence. And then she spoke, her voice trembling.

"I want to be there, too," she said. And she cried softly.

Robert Vasquez is a senior journalism major



EDITORIAL Church and State

Leave religion out of sentencing

Emma Jean Oliver thought she was on her way to the big house, instead she's on her way to the house of God. The line separating church and state has always been fuzzy, but with a federal judge's decision that a convicted criminal attend church in lieu of prison, the line got even fuzzier.

The 29-year-old mother of three faced a maximum \$250,000 fine and three-year federal prison sentence for a drug-related felony. When U.S. District Judge David Belew, Jr. heard Oliver's father had been a Baptist preacher, and that she was the lone provider for her children, the judge decided church would be more productive than a prison stay. Among the terms of her five-year probation is mandatory church attendance along with her children every week for a year, unless major illness or other secular disasters keep them away. A probation officer will make sure Oliver follows the terms of her probation.

The practice of giving certain non-violent criminals alternatives to lengthy prison terms is a positive way of dealing with the prison overcrowding problem —

but to order someone to go to church is a move wide-open to criticism. One day a week, Oliver and her children will attend the church services of her choice. What will she be doing with the rest of her free time, and how constructive will church services be when dealing with practical issues such as parenting skills? Mandatory parenting and lifeskills workshops along with job training certainly could be beneficial.

To further complicate matters, what if Oliver decides that the church of her choice is the Church of Scientology or some other denomination that Judge Belew almost certainly did not have in mind when he mentioned Jesus — would he then order her to attend services at a church of his choice?

Leaders of organized religion complain loudly — and with good reason — when the government appears to interfere in matters of the church, so why should the church be brought into matters of the state? Sending Emma Jean Oliver to prison may not be the answer, but neither is forcing her to go to church.



...SOMEWHERE IN THE MOUNTAINS OF PERU

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013 Reed McDonald
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Texas A&M University
College Station, TX 77843
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So you wanna find your inner-self — keep on dreamin'

"Maybe the hunger for meaning and the sense of emptiness that afflict so many people in our society are related to the fact that we are out of touch with our interior lives because we don't make room for our dreams," says Robert Moss, a writer who has studied how cultures incorporate dreams.



ERIN HILL
Columnist

Dreams can be a road to our creative source, or put us in touch with our larger selves to "recognize the parts of ourselves we have been denying and make peace with them." They can be warnings or rehearsals of future events: Abraham Lincoln, two weeks before he was killed, dreamed that "the President" had been assassinated. Jack Nicklaus dis-

covered a golf grip in a dream. Dreams can also be a "magic carpet ride," like when I went on a fabulous vacation to my grandma's house during my sleep. In many cultures, especially Native American, dreams are an important source of knowledge. In some tribes, the first thing done each morning is sharing dreams with family members.

I've always been interested in dreams but never tried to understand them until I attended a "dream workshop" — a seminar designed to help the participants understand themselves through dreams. At this seminar I learned something crucial about discovering dreams' meaning — since they belong to you, only you can determine their underlying meanings. The best way to discover those meanings is by pondering your dreams.

Those books in the grocery store check-out lines are definitely not the answer. They reduce the dream to one level — a specific meaning for a specific symbol — while dreams are actually multilayered with multiple meanings.

Carl Jung said: "I have no theory about

dreams. I do not know how dreams arise. On the other hand, I know that if we meditate on a dream sufficiently long and thoroughly... something almost always comes of it."

The last night of my freshman year gave me a dream I could not easily forget. I was waiting for my father to pick me up from college, but when he arrived I wasn't packed. Since I had spent all day boxing

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my belongings, I was upset that nothing was ready to go, as was my dad. I ran back into my room to get things together, and when I opened my closet, I saw shelves and shelves of shoes. I was extremely per-

plexed because I knew I couldn't take all of them... then I woke up.

Weird dream, huh? I didn't pay any attention because all dreams have that element of weird in them. But at the seminar we had to share a dream to find its meaning, and I chose this one. After discussing it with my group, I realized those shoes represented me; in selecting which shoes to bring home, I was trying to figure out which parts of me to bring home. I was trying to decide who I was after my first time away from home.

This period of readjustment is a common experience for college students — no universal truth was revealed in my dream, but it opened my eyes. I hadn't given much thought to returning home, but obviously it was on my subconscious mind.

Strangely enough, on the last night of my sophomore year, I dreamed that I was trying to buy some new boots but couldn't choose a pair. This time around it was easy to figure out what I was telling myself — I was once again unsure about leaving school.

Most of us, however, do not utilize our

dreams as a resource. The most important thing is to record them — put a notebook on the table beside the bed and jot down whatever fragments you can remember. It's also useful to tell yourself before falling asleep that you WILL remember your dream when you wake up.

Anne Parker, author of "Understand Your Dreams," gives these steps as a fool-proof way to understand your dreams after you've recorded them:

- Choose a word or phrase that best expresses your feeling.
- Discover when the same feeling is present in your waking life.
- List the characters in your dream — what part of you does each figure represent?
- List the significant places, objects and events and look up their association in a reliable dream image dictionary.
- Summarize the dream's meaning and how it applies to you.

Give these steps a try. Sweet dreams.

Erin Hill is a senior English major

COLLEGE STATION, TX
Feb 15
MAIL CALL
1994

Criticism from both sides shows fairness

I found the juxtaposition of two Mail Call letters last Wednesday quite interesting. One accused The Battalion of reporting the news with a liberal slant, while the other chastised the Batt for being too conservative.

I think this is evidence that The Battalion is doing an excellent job of objectively reporting the news and offering a diverse range of opinion in its columns.

You are too liberal for conservatives and too conservative for liberals.

This is also evidence of the self-righteousness and intolerance on both sides of the sociopolitical spectrum. Both sides are so sure that they are right that they don't even want to hear the other side. Rather than engaging in meaningful dialogue, they simply hurl insults at each other and lament how the other side "just doesn't get it," or how they are not "educated" or "enlightened."

As long as narrow-minded ideologues from the left and the right object

to The Battalion, you are doing your job. Keep up the good work.

James Pawlikowski
Class of '96

More to rape than strangers, dark alleys

If it is true that women are raped or assaulted most commonly by someone we know, then the article, "Be wary when using aggressive self-defense..." (Feb. 9) is inaccurate and unhelpful.

UPD says "avoid circumstances that could lead to sexual assault," and Linda Castoria, executive director of the Brazos County Rape Crisis Center, says "families are great for support."

But how does a girl avoid her brother or her mother's best friend? Who does

she go to when her father rapes her and her mother refuses to believe?

Please give us the facts and not the outdated notion that if we don't talk to strangers and avoid dark alleys we'll be safe.

Gail Lewis
Physical Plant staff

Vote more prisons before rehabilitation

I agree with the statement from the editorial titled "Prison Problems" (Feb. 3) that one mistake can mean a life. This article argued that releasing a capital offender without first attempting to rehabilitate the criminal is a mistake. However, the mistake in such a situation would be allowing a convicted murderer, rapist or

child abuser another chance to commit another atrocious crime. Simply because a criminal is "rehabilitated" does not guarantee that he or she will return to society without the intent to harm again. Many released prisoners commit crimes in order to return to the better life offered to them in our prisons. We need our prisons to be different, not psychiatric hospitals or leisure clubs.

It never ceases to amaze me that some people argue for criminal rights. Once a person has committed a crime, he or she no longer deserves the rights available to law abiding citizens. If given the choice of building more prisons or of providing rehabilitative services to violent offenders, the voters should undoubtedly support building more prisons, unless they wish to risk becoming a victim of a "rehabilitated" criminal themselves.

Lee Pamuk
Class of '95