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## EDITORIAL

# Veterans' dilemma

### VA fails to expedite claims

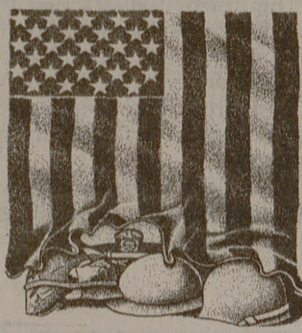
When the Gulf War erupted, all of America rallied together in the belief that whatever happened, America was going to win. No one imagined that when our soldiers came home, our government would ignore them. Although the war ended three years ago, it still rages on for thousands of veterans unable to get benefits they rightly deserve.

Recently, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) admitted that it is losing ground in the fight against thousands of claims for VA pensions and compensations. In 1990, there were 377,000 backlogged claims. By 1995 that number is expected to reach 870,000.

For the average veteran, a 200 day waiting period can be expected once a claim is filed initially, but that figure pales in comparison to the two-year wait just to get a decision from the Board of Veterans Appeals. That doesn't necessarily mean the veteran will get a dime; it just means it takes that long for the

bureaucrats to decide if the case is worth a review.

Excuses for the backlog include under-staffing, lack of money to pay doctors and piles of paper work. VA officials believe the number of claims will actually decline over the next few years. The number of claims for veterans benefits will decrease because those veterans



will be eligible to start waiting for Social Security.

The government has no excuse to defend adequately its apparent lack of sensitivity and speed in taking care of the claims. If a division of the Air Force decided it didn't feel like going to war because

the right papers hadn't been filed in triplicate, they'd end up in the stockade before the jet engines cooled.

Understandably, the VA has a huge task in dealing with the enormous number of claims, but taking care of the people that have taken care of you should be top priority.

# Practicing golden rule good for the soul

## Random acts of kindness brighten life of giver, receiver

There's a new maxim appearing on car bumpers all over America and Oprah (yes, Oprah!) dedicated a recent show to it: "Commit random acts of kindness." (All over Chicago she and her guests paid tolls and shoveled snow.)



ERIN HILL  
Columnist

Wonderful advice, eh?

Apparently this new phase is sweeping the country as it well should. We are in danger of becoming a nation of uncaring and uncared for people. In every community there are people who are hurting or forgotten.

But before it became trendy to be nice, my parents encouraged such behavior because it was the RIGHT thing to do.

When I was young we often chose a family to whom we would deliver gifts anonymously for the twelve days preceding Christmas. Choosing gifts for each family member and baking pastry wreaths kept us busy and happy.

Our family was even the recipient of such kindness once, when my parents and sister were in a car accident. After they were released from the hospital, we didn't have to cook for nearly a month — meals arrived daily from friends and church members, along with offers of help. This eased the strain tremendously as my family recov-

ered, and it demonstrated how many people cared.

This bumper sticker made me reflect on past acts of kindness, then it forced me to consider what I was doing now. Not enough, I concluded and set about to commit such acts, often with abandon. Little things like cards and phone calls to friends actually brightened my day more than theirs, I'm sure.

And this new attitude helped me keep things in perspective. When my roommate and I purchased a magazine subscription from a phony salesman, I was able to chalk up the money to a "random act of kindness." I figured he probably needed the money more than I if he had to be dishonest to earn it. (True, this is a bunch of baloney. But if I viewed it differently, I'd be upset.)

Along with keeping track of my activities, I started noticing what others were doing for me. In fact, people's acts of kindness toward me far outnumbered anything I did. Everything I gave was returned to me in some form, giving a new twist to the old cliché "what goes around, comes around."

The best example of this occurred one morning after it seemed my world had collapsed. Considering that life was over as I knew it (I was having a really bad day), I could hardly go to class. Instead, I sat in the Academic Building rotunda and wept.

It was a sight to see, I'm sure — me in tears. But I felt terribly alone.

Then I felt a tap on my shoulder. "There, there," said a stranger, putting an arm around my shoulders. "It's going to be all right."

I looked up into the smiling face of a little

elderly man in a Dr. Pepper uniform.

He hugged me and whispered, "Now you go dry your face — everything is going to be OK."

With that he handed me a red lollipop and walked back to finish filling the vending machine.

I was stunned.

Then I stopped crying and even giggled a little. I felt comforted.

He gave me a sweet smile when I walked up the stairwell to my class, and I reflected on what had occurred between me and this gentleman. I was struck by the poignancy of both his gift and kindness. Though I had been extremely lonely when I walked into the building, I left feeling cared for.

Unlike this man, I would probably not have the courage to approach someone. I might feel awkward, and my words would be clumsy. But this man's sincerity and unpolished words touched me.

Not many of us bawl in the Academic Building. But people are lonely everywhere we look. We'll find those who feel uncared for and those having bad days in our classrooms, dorms and clubs. A kind word or deed on our part truly can make a difference in the life of another person, whether we are aware of it or not.

Aggieland should be no exception in the kindness trend. After all, aren't we supposed to take care of each other? So go commit those random acts of kindness. The best part, as you'll discover, is that you end up feeling better, too.

Erin Hill is a senior English major



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# Let's face it — they just don't make jingles like they used to

While watching television the other night, I noticed two things. First, Tonya Harding and Nancy Kerrigan would lead off every newscast in America even if Bill Clinton was arrested for the murder of Michael Jackson. Second, the top music hits of the '50s, '60s and '70s are now the jingles for almost every product sold on television today.



DAVE WINDER  
Columnist

I just don't think it's fair that every generation except ours can have flashbacks to the good ol' days by simply watching a hemorrhoid ointment commercial.

Buford: "Betty Jo, would you look at this? They are advertising a hemorrhoid ointment on television at 8 p.m."

Betty Jo: "I know, honey. It is pretty darn sickening. I think we should sue Stumps Hemorrhoid Pads for ruining such a classic song."

*Tears on my pillow,  
 Pain in my rump  
 Because I need Stumps.*

Buford: "Betty Jo, that little jingle just took me back to when we were teenagers. Hell, I even remember where I buried my parents' bodies."

But you really can't blame advertisers for not choosing songs of the '80s. Let's face it — most of them were terrible. The Jettis, Rick Astley and Wham all had numerous hits in the past decade, but I don't think their songs will be selling Wheat Thins anytime soon.

So I think we should show Madison Avenue that the songs of our generation can sell any product they want.

Tone Loc's "Wild Thing" would make a great pitch for Dole String Beans.

*Couldn't get her off the chair  
 She was like static cling  
 But that's what happens*

When gums start smacking  
 When eating Dole string beans.

All the companies that make home pregnancy tests should buy the rights to Madonna's "True Blue."

*If the indicator is true blue  
 Then it's a baby for you.*

Vanessa Williams and Brian McKnight could sell Oxy 10 with their song "Love Is."

**"Betty Jo, that little jingle just took me back to when we were teenagers. Hell, I even remember where I buried my parents' bodies."**  
 — Buford

*Look at this face  
 It was paradise  
 But now it's puscuous  
 I need to start using Oxy 10.*

The big drawback of '80s music is that the songs aren't real catchy. The '60s lyric

"Sugar, sugar, ah, honey, honey" is perfect for pitching anything, but the same cannot be said for any Bon Jovi tune.

*I walk these streets, a Hostess Ding Dong on my face*

*I eat them five at a time cause I'm addicted to the taste*

*Some people think they know you by the snack food that you eat*

*I eat Twinkies all the time because they're so gosh darn sweet.*

*'Cause I'm a junk food cowboy until the day that I die*

*And I'm wanted, (wanted) for eating Hostess fruit pies.*

One hit wonders also turn out to be great. Commercial jingles these days are loaded with them. But could the '80s most famous flash in the pan, Vanilla Ice, sell throat lozenges with his rip-off hit?

*Nice, Nice baby. (Funky Baseline)*

*New and improved Nice, Nice baby.*

*All right stop, collaborate and listen*

*Nice is back with a brand new invention*

*Something to cure your pain rightily*

*Cooling your throat daily and nightly*

*Will it ever stop? Oh, no, no*  
*Because sore throats have got to go.*  
*It's Nice, Nice baby. New and improved*  
*Nice, Nice baby.*

The '90s aren't doing too great so far either. I just don't foresee Snoop Doggy Dog or Pearl Jam songs selling goods on television. Then again, I'm pretty sure nobody thought Canned Heat's "On the Road Again" would help sell beer. So one day we might see Pearl Jam's "Jeremy" on a commercial.

*At home, cleaning toilets, with dirty socks*  
*With mildew on top, lemon yellow stains*  
*His arms rested on his knees, while the grungies lay in the small pool*

*Daddy never paid attention to the fact that mommy never cleaned*

*King Jeremy used Toilet Duck today.*

Then again, the advertisers will probably choose Michael Bolton songs. So I won't get to remember my glory days anyway.

Dave Winder is a sophomore journalism major

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## Remembering a hero

"As the men filed into Valley Forge at the beginning of the winter of 1777-78, they passed a tall figure on a horse. He didn't greet them, but it was enough that he was there. And from where he sat, he could see that many of them were barefoot. Some were leaving bloody footprints in the snow ...

At key critical junctures in this nation's history, the right man has been in the right place at the right time — often enough for those who believe that God governs in the affairs of men, to see His

hand upon them. Such a man was George Washington, born on this day in 1732," — from "The Glory of America" by Peter Marshall and David Manuel.

Sometime today just pause and reflect upon this noble hero, a man of character, integrity, and conviction, and his role in the establishment of our great country. May we never take for granted the price which he and others paid for the liberty and freedoms we enjoy.

Josh Summey  
Class of '96

## Battalion needs good crossword puzzle

Two things about The Battalion have become evident to me. (1) For the most part Mail Call is a forum given to selected Aggies for which they are allowed to voice their frustrations, and (2) the "comic" strips are a pathetic waste of space.

So as to keep tradition number one alive, I am writing. Let's look at the words "comic strip." Comic is taken from the word "comedy" which pertains to humor. We all know that humor plays no role in The Battalion's "funnies."

This is not written to offend the creators of the strips, but then again if I knew the people who actually spend the time and "effort" creating them, I probably wouldn't care if they felt insulted. Rather than simply bitching I will offer a solution. How about a

crossword puzzle? You wouldn't even have to create one. I'm sure the AP puts one out. Just a suggestion.

Brian Creech  
Class of '95

## Basketball attendance nothing to brag about

Why is there such low attendance at basketball games as opposed to football? Is it because the team sucks? No. They are 16-6 and leading the SWC. Maybe G. Rolie is too huge to fill on Saturday afternoons. I don't think so. It only holds 7,500.

Obviously, the basketball program needs to take lessons from the football program. First of all, all you boosters out there need to start paying these basketball players for work not done. Hey, it may be

illegal, but it keeps Kyle Field full. Secondly, Coach Barone needs to get A&M a really high ranking and then find the worst teams in the country to come here and play. No true Aggie wants to see any real competition in College Station. Thirdly, the basketball program should concentrate more on becoming a professional farm team than a competitive collegiate team. Maybe basketball just isn't the thing at A&M. Kermit Davis, the previous basketball coach, made numerous recruiting violations, and still the Aggies stayed away. I just don't understand it.

Aggies always pride themselves on their spirit and tradition, yet it never seems to bother anyone that that little school in Austin averages an attendance almost four times that of Texas A&M. But I guess as long as we have a bigger fire than they do, it doesn't really matter.

Keith Stubbs  
Class of '96