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Of ghosts and rings and other things Many myths, true and otherwise, pervade A&M campus

It was late at night, many years ago, when a young apprentice slashed his leg with a cleaver in the Animal Industries Building. Crippled with pain, he crawled to the elevator. He was barely able to reach the button before he collapsed onto the floor, waiting for his ride to help. The elevator never arrived, and the young apprentice died there, in a pool of his own blood.



ROBERT VASQUEZ
 Columnist

Today, students swear that, during the night, the same elevator goes up and down, scaling the building with no one on board and no one waiting for it. No one they can see, anyway.

The story sounds farfetched, but only a smidgen more so than many of the myths that flavor this campus like salt on potato chips. From Aggie rings to dead roommates, tall tales soar to heights not seen since the likes of Paul Bunyan. For a school that harbors such a strong distaste for Bevo, there seems to be no short supply of bull.

For instance, there's the "Walk" myth. If a professor is late to class, the myth goes, students are entitled to leave, without fear of penalty for their absence. Wrong.

Though commonly regarded by students as an airtight defense, such an argument holds no water with professors. Mary Jo

Powell, director of University Relations, said, "That's a popular myth at schools all over, not just here at A&M. But they won't find that written anywhere. Of course, that's how myths happen. They're not written down; they're passed on by word of mouth."

Another myth many Aggies hear is the one about dead roommates. The myth stipulates that if your roommate dies, you get an "A" in every course for that semester.

"And I thought I'd heard everything," Powell laughed. "I've worked here about 15 years, and I've never heard that one."

Apparently only another myth. This dead roommate thing concerned me more than most because it was my own roommate who informed me of it. Toward the end of a particularly tough semester, he approached me with this story. I couldn't help noticing the knife in his hand. I locked my door after that ... But I digress.

Perhaps the most popular Aggie myth involves a shiny gold band that bears the proud name of this university — which, by the way, sinks rather rapidly when placed into a pitcher of Shiner Bock. That ring is not paid for — wholly or in part — by the Association of Former Students or any other University entity, for that matter. Nope, you pay the full price for that baby.

Carolyn Swanzy, director of the Aggie Ring Program, says, contrary to popular belief, the Association does not cover half of the cost of A&M's senior rings. Swanzy did say the widespread myth is based on a very pertinent truth.

The Association negotiates for Aggie seniors to receive their rings at very low

prices that are unheard of in almost any other school. Students in Houston, Dallas and even that little school in Austin pay at least \$100 more for their rings.

"If the Association wasn't conscious of keeping prices down and passing those savings on to students, they wouldn't have the low price that they get here," Swanzy said.

One student from the University of Houston came with her friend to pick up her Aggie ring and was shocked to hear that it cost only \$160. She had paid more than \$500 for her school ring.

One story about Aggies that is certainly no myth concerns the adoration they show for their senior rings. Each semester, when the rings are expected to arrive, Aggies are there, ready and waiting to get their first. Many show up early.

Swanzy said the most anxious students actually camp out on the steps of the building the night before, with sleeping bags and radios.

"One time they had a yell practice," Swanzy said. "I can still remember all those students lined up. They yelled 'R-I-N-G, Ring! Yeah!'"

They were really excited, she said. "I'd be disappointed if they weren't. That's what the tradition is all about. The students being excited about the Aggie ring."

Yes, Aggies get excited about their rings. And their sports. And their politics. And their traditions ... That's one part of A&M that is not myth: the Aggie Spirit. It's leg-end.

Robert Vasquez is a senior journalism major



EDITORIAL

Seeing both sides

Israel, like Palestine, has extremists

With the recent events in Israel, Americans are getting a closer look at both sides of that country's internal conflicts between Palestinians and Israelis. There are radical extremists on both sides of this issue, and it is time for the West to realize and acknowledge that fact.

For many of us, our perception of the Middle East crisis changed last week. Baruch Goldstein, a New York-born emergency room doctor who settled in Israel 11 years ago, opened fire on Palestinian Muslims as they prayed in a mosque in the West Bank. The Jewish extremist came from a nearby settlement where the civilians are heavily armed and the radical views that prompted Goldstein to massacre the Palestinians are prevalent.

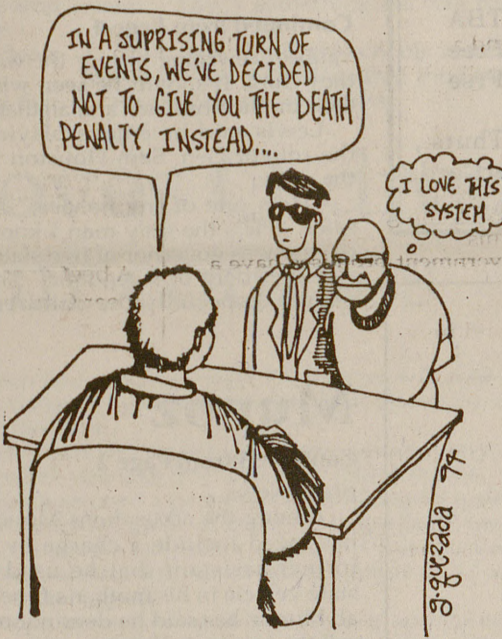
The U.S. government and much of the world has been supportive of Israel for decades, and while this should not change, the best policy is to present both sides of the issue. The media has regularly portrayed most Palestinians as terrorists who will stop at nothing to win their own territory, but the actions of Israeli extremists have been largely overlooked until now.

Clearly, both sides include people who want not peace, but to see the other side suffer. It is these irrational people, be they Palestinians or Israelis, who deserve to be criticized in the public arena.

Ever since the attack, there have been accounts of violence in the West Bank. Israel is trying to make amends by releasing political prisoners and disarming some Jewish settlers. The PLO is under pressure from radical Palestinians and has refused to return to the peace table.

While talks will probably resume in the future, the peace process at present seems endless. The respective leaders can compromise and negotiate all they want, but Yassir Arafat and Yitzhak Rabin's famous handshake in Washington will amount to little until the radical actions of a few extremists comes to an end. Individuals guilty of terrorism plague both sides. Hopefully, leaders will be rational enough to continue working toward peace, despite these shameful acts of terrorism.

There can be peace in the Middle East, but both sides must realize that a few radicals do not speak for all the people.



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Address letters to:
The Battalion - Mail Call
 013 Reed McDonald
 Mail stop 1111
 Texas A&M University
 College Station, TX 77843
 Fax: (409) 845-2647

Student Government provides opportunity, helps community

Mention student government around campus, and prepare to hear a variety of opinions, descriptions and stereotypes. Many students think that Student Government members are elitists. They wear suits to class, always carry a leather super deluxe Franklin planner and never travel farther north than Rudder Tower. They always park in the University Center Parking Garage, write memos instead of talking face to face and carry beepers. Some people claim they inbreed.

Many students question Student Government's role on campus. They don't like the way this year's budget was handled by



MELISSA MEGLIOLA
 Columnist

the Senate and complain that their concerns are not heard. Some feel that Student Government has too much power on campus — others think it doesn't have enough.

Although the official role of the Student Government Association is to act as the "representative and governing body of students," most of its members know nothing about the allocation of state funds, the Open Records Act, or on- and off-campus constituencies. They aren't supposed to.

During my four years as a member of Student Government, I have worked on several different committees. As a freshman, I was a fish aide, the official title for a low-life gofer. I answered phones, typed letters, ran copies and spent endless hours writing what I thought were hilarious top ten lists on the dry erase board in the office. The theory behind such indentured servitude was to provide freshmen with a general overview of Student Government in exchange for three hours of slave labor. That first year, I met many of the people I now consider to be my best friends. We studied together, played Jenga and took countless road trips before realiz-

ing that a direct relationship exists between studying and grades.

As part of the Big Event committee, I helped plan the annual service project in which A&M students have a chance to go out and help members of the Bryan-College Station community. They mow lawns, plant flowers, cut down dead trees and paint houses. On the actual day of the Big Event, I drove from site to site making sure

Many students think that Student Government members are elitists. They wear suits to class and never travel farther north than Rudder Tower.

that working conditions were safe, checked for things like rickety ladders, and supplied student volunteers with the tools and lawn equipment they needed to complete their projects. Although some jobs, like

painting a long fence, seemed tedious, almost invariably those working on a project were satisfied knowing that their work was truly appreciated.

My only complaint with being part of the planning committee for Big Event was that even though I spent weeks setting up projects, I was never able to actually do the work myself. Then last year, when I came to the final house on my last supply run, students were still busily working to clear weeds and rubbish from the front yard of a house in Bryan. The owner, an 82-year-old woman, was concerned that she would be an easy target for robberies because the weeds kept her house out of view from the street. A few hours later, when we finally finished, I went inside to call about having the 30 or so bags of brush picked up from the curb. The woman showed me pictures of her children and grandchildren, thanked me again and again, and went on about how Aggies are wonderful people.

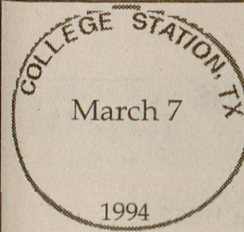
One night this fall, I sat in the Student Government office talking to the man who led the very first Midnight Yell Practice. While researching in the archives for Tradi-

tions Council, I had found conflicting information about the date of that first night on the steps of the YMCA building. Consistent in all the information was the involvement of a yell leader who was then called "Hossfly." So, I decided to find him. Hossfly, now Col. Berryhill, lives in San Antonio and was thrilled when I called him to clear things up.

Student government is not for everyone. But, neither is the MSC, Greek life or the Corps of Cadets. Student Government does offer fulfilling leadership opportunities and friendships for about 600 students on campus. Members recruit for A&M in high schools, plan the Muster ceremony each year, organize Parents' Weekend and raise money for the United Way. Not all of us are high-strung, uptight and unapproachable.

Still don't believe me? Today is the last day to file for elections and prove me wrong.

Melissa Megliola is a senior industrial engineering major



MAIL CALL

Replace old, drafty Academic dome

I am so glad that the work is almost complete on the Academic Building windows. It is about time that those old, drafty windows are gone, and in their place are the new, black, shiny, energy-efficient units.

I guess that the Physical Plant reasoned that the replacement was necessary because the old ones leaked, were a maintenance problem, looked old and dirty and

did not fit in with the neighboring buildings. This remodeling was necessary to the overall look of the campus. We cannot have a single building trying to express an identity that is different than that of the others. Like the Corps, they must be unified.

It seems to me that the only thing left to do is to remove or replace the dome. I am sure that the copper dome is just as drafty, and the leaks and corrosion are creating similar maintenance problems. It sure is old and looks awfully dirty to me. If it is the Physical Plant's aim to make all the buildings look alike, then we should re-

move the dome altogether. I am a realistic person and must face the fact that the Aggie alumni would never allow such a vicious attack on a such a venerable landmark.

So, let us replace the old copper dome with a lovely, cast-aluminum dome with a green, baked-enamel finish. The new dome would not leak air and water, and it sure would be clean. It would certainly fit in with all the other lovely works of architecture on this campus.

I just want to applaud the work of the Physical Plant and the bureaucracy that moves it. Your swift, decisive actions have made this campus a more beautiful place. Might I suggest that the next step should be a fiberglass "Sully" statue, astroturf around the MSC or maybe some cheerful, computer-synthesized chimes atop Albritton Tower.

Kevin Bauer
 Graduate student

Another example of need for handguns

We were shocked and angered about the "Terrorized by a stalker..." article in The Battalion. Julie Dalton was threatened in just about every conceivable way. Sexual threats, murder threats, torture threats, physical confrontations — you name it. She contacted various school agencies, including two police departments. Julie finally decided to accept a handgun from her father to carry with her as a defensive means. The moment she decided to habitually carry the handgun for self-defense was the moment she decided to become a criminal, at least in the eyes of the Texas gun laws. It is illegal to knowingly and habitually carry a handgun. Reportedly, she pulled her weapon on the stalker at a grocery store. If this store sold alcohol, then her action is considered a third-degree felony!

Julie, we have no doubt in our minds that you were justified in brandishing the weapon. The use of the handgun kept you from being attacked and raped (probably saved your life). But the law is the law, and you are now a criminal for defending yourself while your attacker is STILL on the streets.

It was obvious that only you could have protected yourself the night of that attack and you did what you had to do. Would you be alive today if you did not use the weapon? It is shameful that Texas law sees you as a criminal for protecting yourself. We hope one day this law will change and you will be able to protect yourself without worry of judicial reprisal. If one life could be saved by changing this law, it would be worth it.

Owen Watson
 Feed and Fertilizer Control Service

Accompanied by nine signatures