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EDITORIAL Under fire

Tenure process needs overhaul

The tenure-granting process used by Texas A&M University is once again under fire. Although University officials claim they deal more effectively with tenure than other schools of comparable size, many problems seem to continue. The incentive of the tenure process is not the issue. It is how the requirements are weighted that should be reconsidered.

Tenure, according to the University manual on policy and procedures, allows faculty members to remain on staff permanently unless dismissed for a good cause. Applicants are reviewed based on their research, teaching and service to the University. Critics of the process claim teaching isn't weighted as heavily as other requirements, and that it is easier to measure the success of empirical research than to gauge the success of educating.

Throughout all of this controversy, the biggest losers are the students. Professors who do not receive tenure tend to look for a university that will offer them better opportunities.

On the other hand, some tenure recipients become so consumed with research, it's hard for the student to compete for attention. Either way, the students do not get the full benefit of the teacher's time and expertise. How much national recognition for research does a university really need to justify losing good teachers to the current tenure process?

The tenure committees should weigh the requirements equally, in practice as well as speech. The students of this university should be their top priority. The best way for Texas A&M to get national exposure is through the successes of its graduates, not the professors that may or may not receive tenure.

A middle ground must be established. Possibly a dual form of tenuring track could serve to consider both research specialists and education specialists without bias. Then teaching professors could focus their energies back on their classes. This system would give the students the chance to compete with other students — not with someone's research.

From spies to Sarajevo — what you know

Survey indicates selective knowledge of current events

After pondering what most college students know about current events, I decided to distribute a small survey. The results are pretty interesting.

Question one asked: "What happens on Tuesday?" Of those who responded, only a very few knew that this Tuesday was election day. Original answers included, "The coupons come out in The Battalion," and "Cold front comes in."

The next question seemed easier. Almost everyone had heard about the CIA spy who sold secrets to the Russians. However, when asked who Aldrich Hazen Ames was, very few connected his name to the spy in question. One person came close and said that he was "some European spy," but other answers ranged from "developed the Ames test for cancer testing" to "founder of Ames, Iowa."

When asked what should happen to Ames, a freshman electrical engineering major responded, "I think he should be imprisoned for life with no food or water, hands strapped down, with Chinese water torture."

A senior English major took a different stance. "I think we'd better not overreact," she wrote. "I hear that one of the things Ames did was to reveal one of our spies over there. So what are we getting so self-righteous about? It's rather funny, really." Interesting view-



LYNN BOOHER
Columnist

points. The next question was one a few more people could relate to: "Who did you root for, Tonya or Nancy and why?" The majority chose Nancy. Support for her ranged from: "She has a better butt" to "She seemed nicer. Tonya just really seemed snobby and rude about the whole thing, whether she was guilty or not."

Support for Tonya included, "Nancy is a bi—" and that Tonya "had a much better body." A sophomore psychology major wrote, "I almost root for Tonya because she is a victim of vicious exploitation by the media.... She hasn't even been tried (in a court of law) and people are ready to condemn her. Nancy got hit on the knee, healed, got to skate and was made 'America's Sweetheart.' Tonya, on the other hand, has had to fight the whole way." One person rooted for Oksana Baiul.

Another question stated, "Did you know that ABC newsmen Sam Donaldson said, 'You gotta love any movie where the heroine is named Pussy Galore,' in reference to his favorite movie, 'Goldfinger'? What do you think of that?" A few people expressed support in phrases like, "Sam's the man!" and "Whoop!" But many found his statement "tacky" and "crude." One person got down to the point of Donaldson's professional appearance by writing, "Should I care? He reports the news just fine."

Most people had heard about the Hebron mosque massacre. They estimated the number killed to be anywhere between 20 and 300. Actual numbers were around 30. A poignant statement from a junior wildlife and fisheries science major was, "I can't believe the inhumanity, the violence, the senseless bloodshed continues."

Almost everyone also knew about the fighting in Sarajevo. A couple of people mentioned that it was the site of the 1984 Winter Olympics. One person only identified it as the site where "Archduke Franz Ferdinand was assassinated, which began World War I."

Respondents were about evenly divided on the question of whether they liked NAFTA or not. Opponents said such things as, "It stinks because the U.S. was already the richest nation in the world and couldn't benefit from it," and even, "Can you say 'giant sucking sound'?" Supporters tended to make their answers more eloquent. One person wrote, "In the long run, I think free trade will benefit U.S. companies and bring the Mexican market up."

Very few people remembered the media uproar last semester over Antioch College's rules about sexual conduct and date rape. The policy there basically states that before engaging in any sexual activity, the partners each must receive the other's verbal permission, whether they are hand-holding or anything more involved. One of the three people who had heard of the policy wrote that Texas A&M should not adopt similar rules because "sex is not something to be governed like jaywalking or speeding."

What does this survey show? Perhaps that people tend to concentrate on news that is sensationalized, like the Tonya-n-Nancy show. Or maybe it shows that the people who report the news don't spend enough time talking about really important things, like loss of human rights or life. You decide.

Lynn Booher is a sophomore English and psychology major



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Out in Luckenbach, Texas, there ain't nobody feelin' no pain

About 10 o'clock Friday night I was in the newsroom of the San Angelo Standard-Times wearing a white shirt and tie, proof-reading the obituaries when I realized I'd been in San Angelo for more than a month without even leaving the city limits. Nearly 24 hours later I was in Luckenbach, Texas, wearing my father's ragged old barn jacket and a flannel shirt, singing Robert Earl Keen songs with some Harley-Davidson biker who had a guitar.



DAVE THOMAS
Guest columnist

The two places are worlds apart... and it did me a world of good. I graduated from Texas A&M University in December, and after a final look at the

familiar surroundings of College Station, I plunged into the "real world" of journalism. I was strong; I was free; I was on my own.

A month later, I was lonely. And I have to admit this because my phone bill would betray me anyway. So Saturday morning I packed a bag and left.

I spent the day hiking around Enchanted Rock State Park, and around evening time I drove to Luckenbach.

There's not much in Luckenbach — basically just a dance hall and a general store with a bar in it. Right after I got there, a group of Harley-Davidson bikers roared up in a cloud of dust. They were fresh from Cut-and-Shoot, Texas, and they were thirsty. I eased up to the bar with them and the night was under way.

They say, "Everybody's Somebody in Luckenbach." And everybody seemed to be there. Old ladies, young ladies, children, a mother and her son (who was drinking Dr. Pepper while his mom drank at least a six-pack of Shiner), bikers, ranchers, hip-

pies, rednecks, tourists, locals and me. I never thought I'd see such a group in one place, but we were all there, and we were all having fun. I'm no stranger to bars; I've

A long-haired biker raucously sang Robert Earl Keen's "The Armadillo Jackal." But don't laugh — I have special feelings for that song.

been to several, but I've never been to one that was more down-to-earth or more friendly. Luckenbach is in a class by itself.

Later in the evening I was sitting on a tree stump, tapping my boots to the rhythm of three old men playing guitars and singing Willie Nelson songs. As I sat there beneath the stars, I thought back on the good times in my life and for a fleeting moment, the world was perfect. The tranquility wouldn't last.

I was enjoying a peaceful night, entirely at ease with the whole world, when I heard the sounds coming from the bar. The sounds were unmistakable. Somebody was singing a song that only an Aggie could have written, and I jumped up to go investigate, pausing only long enough to finish my beer.

I opened the door to the bar and was stunned to find a long-haired biker raucously singing Robert Earl Keen's "The Armadillo Jackal." Yes, the song is about a man who dies while running over armadillos, but don't laugh — I have special feelings for that song.

I stepped inside and bought that man a beer. Impressed with my taste in music, the man invited me to sing with him, and I gladly accepted. Later, I would wonder how the patrons of the bar demonstrated such incredible tolerance for my terrible singing.

Anyway, the rest of the evening degenerated into stories best not told as he and I sang songs I wouldn't even listen to when I was sober.

I slept in my truck in the parking lot that night. I woke up Sunday morning (with no way to hold my head that didn't hurt) and drove into Fredericksburg to get some breakfast. I toured the Hill Country the rest of the morning before returning to Luckenbach that afternoon to drink some Lone Star beer with a cowboy named Ross.

Monday afternoon, I drove back to San Angelo happy about everything in life except how much money I'd spent. And if I hadn't run out of money, I might still be in Luckenbach.

Don't get me wrong, San Angelo is a good place to live, and I like working there. But if you're feeling down-and-out, I recommend you take a road trip to cure your blues. After all, "Out in Luckenbach, Texas, there ain't nobody feeling no pain."

Dave Thomas is a journalism graduate of Texas A&M and now works for the San Angelo Standard-Times

COLLEGE STATION, TX
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MAIL CALL
 1994

Asians should be represented at retreat

This letter is in response to "Retreat targets cultural awareness among leaders" in The Battalion (Feb. 25). The University Awareness for Cultural Together-ness (U-ACT) organized a retreat among University leaders to discuss multicultural issues. The general idea of identifying various groups among the University and discussing opinions is great, but it creates a problem when only certain or-

ganizations, which U-ACT deems appropriate, are invited. Some of the groups listed in the article were the Interfraternity Council, MSC Hospitality Council, Excellence Uniting Culture, ExCel and Aggie Orientation Leader Program. While talking to a friend who went on this retreat, I asked her if representatives from Asian organizations (India, China, Taiwan, Pakistan, etc.) were present, and she replied, "No."

Asians are one of the largest minority populations at A&M and many other universities around the nation. If this retreat was to promote cultural awareness among

the University, then Asian student leaders should have also been invited to express their opinions on multicultural issues.

Ketan Sukkawala
Class of '94

Work, faith not same

Why are people being so petty about the faculty ad placed in the paper? A faculty member has a right to talk to a student, even if it doesn't pertain to academics — whether it is in an office, over the phone or at home. It has nothing to do with the University.

A person and their job are not one in the same. It is a prime example of how people of different religions can't get along. Multiculturalism does not work.

Shea Snyder
Class of '95

Limbaugh only tells audience half truth

All this Rush Limbaugh propaganda is making me quite sick. How anyone intelligent enough to be attending college (let alone one of the greatest colleges in the world) can be suckered in is a complete mystery. And now there is support to bring him here.

Like all good flimflam guys, Rush will only tell you what he wants you to know. For example, on a show late last year he showed some statistics on a mayoral election.

A black candidate and a white candidate had been in a run-off and Rush had the racial breakdown of the voters. Only five percent of the black voters went with the white candidate while thirty percent of the white voters marked their ballots for the black candidate.

Rush went on to use some of President Clinton's words in a typical Rush Limbaugh misquote to imply racial discrimination existed only in non-whites. What Limbaugh did not show were statistics on economic breakdown, party affiliation, or bring any other significant criterion to let you form your own opinion. I guess it's all black and white to Rush. "I've got a monopoly on the truth." I think that most of us know what Rush's monopoly is on.

Next time you watch him (and I strongly advise you don't) pay attention to what the inventive little storyteller doesn't say — that is where you'll find the truth Rush is always talking about.

Jarrett Guidry
Class of '94

Anna Worthy
Class of '93