

PRO CON

Should employees have the right to mandate drug testing?

MICHAEL LANDAUER

Columnist



FRANK STANFORD

Columnist



My friend exercised his right to privacy in a big way. No one knew how much pot he smoked, but he could afford to be so private. He had no job and didn't go to school. Pot was all he did - for a while, anyway.

I talked to him the other day and found out he had quit the habit that had taken over his life. The reason: the company he was going to work for had mandatory drug testing.

I've never breathed a bigger sigh of relief. I can't help being in favor of giving companies the right to test employees for drugs. Some company's drug policy gave me my friend back.

When someone gets a job, it means they are taking responsibility for their life. Certain things are expected of them. If a company expects its employees to be drug-free, that is just one more responsibility for that employee and one less fear for friends and family members of drug addicts.

Employers also have every right to expect their employees to remain drug free. It is reasonable for an employer to say that a drug user may not be as responsible as a person who does not use illegal drugs. And what employer does not look for responsible employees? It is a core requirement for any job and being chosen for a job is a privilege, not a right.

The government must let companies keep this selection process. Is the government going to say that drugs are illegal, but companies can't discriminate against criminals? That's hypocritical, absurd and, fortunately, very unlikely.

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The government asks us to give up certain privileges in order to gain protections. For example, letting cars drive 75 mph on the freeways caused more accidents in America than a 55 mph speed limit did. So the government made drivers give up the convenience of excessive speed in order to make driving a little more safe.

Drugs are illegal for the same reason. Drugs can destroy people like they were starting to destroy my friend. There are very good reasons why we teach children to "just say no" to drugs, and standing against drugs requires a consistent message. When we tell kids they shouldn't do drugs, they should also be told if they do, they may not find jobs.

Privacy is just an abstract right, but jobs and responsibility are what make people productive members of society. If someone's philosophical right is so important to them that it keeps them from getting a job, I guess I offer my compliments to their resolve - and I'll be sure to drop an extra dollar in their cup when I see them begging on the streets.

Michael Landauer is a freshman journalism major

There are many arguments for legalizing "drugs" in America, some I agree with and some I don't. But since many drugs are illegal at this time, we all have to decide how to deal with them.

If we are big-time junkies, our main problem is finding more drugs. If we are anti-drug activists or teetotalers, our main concern is to either stay away from all drug activity or users, or hunt them down and see that justice is done. If employers had only these two types of individuals to hire, the choice for employment would be quite easy. But it's not.

Just as there is such a thing as responsible drinking, responsible drug use exists as well. Allowing an employee to be tested not only violates his privacy, but also is not relevant to his work.

In addition to these two extremes, millions of Americans - a large number of whom are college students - engage in what could be called "occasional drug use." These are people who use marijuana, cocaine, LSD and a number of other "designer drugs" in a purely recreational capacity, and in a frequency similar or identical to those who just drink beer. These people are in the work force as well - and just like alcohol drinkers - must monitor their consumption such that it doesn't affect their working lives adversely. Just as there is such a thing as responsible drinking, responsible drug use exists as well.

If a university official drinks alcohol strictly on personal time with friends and gets tipsy or drunk, it is no one else's business. We would all expect that on Monday there would be no problem with alcohol at work, and if there was, the person would be fired or sent to AA or both. If the University could test for alcohol usage (merely a legal drug), would it be in their interest to know of a beer and barbecue binge? No.

The primary issue regarding mandatory drug testing is that of privacy and relevance. Allowing an employee to be tested not only violates his privacy, but also is not relevant to his work. What if the drug at the barbecue had been marijuana instead of beer? Would the testing be any more relevant given the individual still did a good job? Would it matter that pot is illegal? If the company is interested in an employee's moral or legal leanings away from employment, then shouldn't workers be tested for wife or child abusing, infidelity, sexual promiscuity and religious practices as well?

I completely understand the factory owner who wants to insure his workers don't cut their arms off, or someone else's, but a simple skills check by a foreman would be adequate. If someone is legitimately suspect, a drug test and/or a dismissal might be in order, but only at this point.

Although mandatory drug testing is currently legal and is likely to remain so, it is a violation of personal privacy and is based on prejudicial attitudes towards certain drugs.

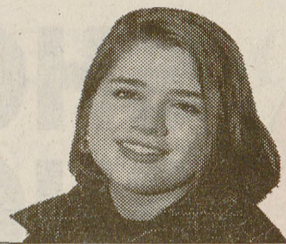
Frank Stanford is a graduate philosophy major

The Little comedian that couldn't

Stand-up's overly abusive humor fails to get laughs

LYNN BOOHER

Columnist



Last weekend I visited my home town of Austin in order to run the Capitol 10,000, a ten kilometer race that is routed through some of the main streets in town. Although the race started at 8 o'clock Sunday morning, I decided, as any good college student would, to go out Saturday night. This led me to Sixth Street, and eventually to one of its comedy clubs. My friends and I haggled with the bouncers to let us in at a lower rate. Later we realized that it wasn't low enough.

The first couple of comedians were pretty funny. One guy explained that his father was convinced that by leaving the front door open during the summer, he was effectively air conditioning the state. It wasn't that funny until he imitated a weather man forecasting that "a cold front covering the entire state of Texas is coming in from Bob's house."

My friends and I sat patiently through several acts, waiting for the "phenomenal" (according to the bouncers) headliner, Dave Little.

When he finally came on, several people had left already, probably thinking the comedian before him was the main act. Little entered the stage with an attitude. And it wasn't an especially positive one. His act was nothing really unusual until about halfway through. That's when an elderly woman walked into the small club.

She was wearing a strange hat and was carrying a large shoulder bag and what looked like a cross between a ukelele and a guitar. Her appearance was so unusual it seemed perfectly normal for Little to comment on it. Unfortunately, he went too far.

It all started with an innocent question about why she was carrying the instru-

ment. She said she was a yodeler from a small town outside of Austin who had come for the evening, presumably to perform - barring the unlikely event that he had hired her to be ridiculed. So Dave asked for a demonstration. Her yodeling was good, and my sister said she had actually heard of this woman.

This apparently didn't matter to Little, however. He proceeded to make obnoxious "yodeling" sounds at various intervals for the next 20 minutes. The woman tried to laugh and play along even as she was being ridiculed. She told him her name was Lucky Jewel, and he had a heyday with it. "We'd be lucky if you left!" he announced.

Only the drunk people thought he was funny, and I wasn't lucky enough to be one of them.

Mr. Little-laughter then proceeded to bring down the house with his "nice tits" comment as a young lady passed by on her way back from the restroom. If that wasn't enough, he insulted the waitress more times than I could keep track.

Poor Lucky fared the worst. Little spent more than 15 consecutive minutes making fun of her - I know; I timed it. When he couldn't get any more drunken laughs from

comments about her dress or by sarcastically yodeling, he switched to questioning her sanity. He started singing a song about being schizophrenic and inserted a little commentary about her into it.

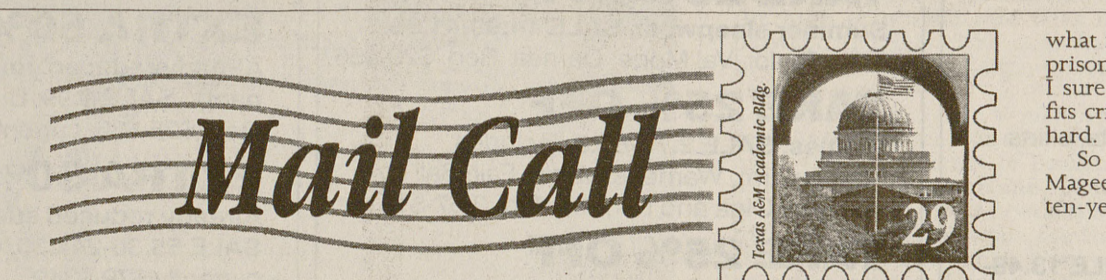
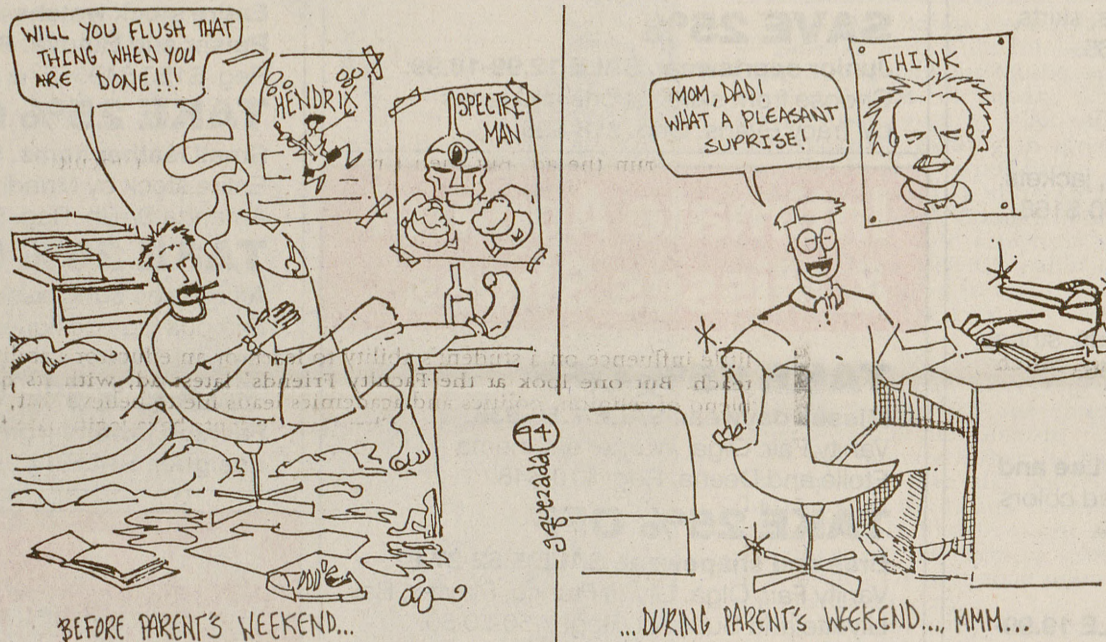
When people started being less responsive, he changed to blaming Lucky Jewel for "ruining" his act. The only person I saw messing up his act was the comedian himself. Even when Jewel moved into the back of the room to avoid the limelight, Little continued his harassment. It wasn't until after she left that he finally let off.

Meanwhile, those around me were wondering what had happened to his prepared material. Once the old lady was gone, the headlining act deteriorated more to using material from previous acts. When that didn't work, he actually called to another comedian to help him on stage.

The funniest part of his entire routine came when Little looked at the audience and announced, "These are my people!" and my friend Maureen responded, "Let your people go!"

When we finally escaped from the hell of his comedic inability, everyone in my group was flabbergasted. Is it acceptable to have to pay money to listen to someone insult women and the elderly? I realize that a lot of modern "comedians" use sexual or other potentially offensive jokes as part of their acts, but I hadn't heard of the new trend of actually insulting the people who have paid to listen to you. Maybe next time I'll just skip the comedy scene and listen to some music instead.

Lynn Booher is a sophomore English and psychology major



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what is. And it should be noted that not every prison official agrees with the Ruiz judgment - I sure wouldn't agree to something that benefits criminals and makes my job three times as hard.

So how do you explain this to a little kid, Magee asks in her column. Well, perhaps my ten-year old sister could explain it to her.

Mika Scott Spears
Class of '94

What 'Kiss-Off' means

The "Kiss-Off at Kyle" is an event planned to raise money for the United Way by trying to set a record for the "Most People Kissing at the same time." It could either be a passionate kiss or just a kiss to show your affection. As the flyer states, all Ags are welcome to bring their honey, their parents, their children or their pets to kiss.

All proceeds go to the United Way, which supports community organizations like the Boys and Girls club, etc. As more than 40,000 Ags make the B-CS community their home, it would be a good way of giving back to the community.

A note about The Battalion's story on the Kiss-Off: student organizations spend a lot of time preparing for their events. They contact the Batt to get some good/positive publicity out of it. It is disturbing to see the main focus of a story/event missed and the views of a few highlighted, to make it controversial.

Ranjan Natarajan
Class of '94

Chair Texas A&M United Way Campaign for Students

Fish Camp, T-Camp far from brainwashing

Brainwashing?! How dare Frank Stanford accuse Fish Camp and T-camp counselors of brainwashing incoming students into the "Aggie" way of life! Some people are not like Stanford, who obviously came to this university to get a degree; some people (like myself) came to this great university because we wanted to be Aggies, experience the numerous and wonderful traditions, and honestly feel proud about saying where we attended college. Is it not natural to want to feel your school is better than others? Is it wrong to have friendly rivalries with other schools? There is no greater student body in this country than the one here. Of course there are some people who give this university a bad name (those few "over-Corps-

ed" Corps members, people who steal, a few members of the Board of Regents, the Battalion "editorial" board), but that is no reason to condemn us all as thieves and liars. Excuse me if I hold onto the Aggie Code of Honor. I feel it is a good code to live by. I guess that makes me "mindless" in your blurred eyes, but at least I can say I have morals and, more importantly, honor.

Michael S. Mason
Class of '94

Columnist off mark on prison budget criticism

This letter is in response to Jenny Magee's column titled, "State budget ranks criminals over law-abiding citizens."

My father is one of the "senior managers living in free housing maintained by the white coated inmate servants who cook, clean, and babysit." It's not quite that glamorous. Our house is no doubt one of the oldest in Huntsville. It probably isn't relevant to most taxpayers unless they were paying taxes in the 1920s when it was built. Are you jealous yet?

If Magee is so concerned about inmates sitting around all day watching soap operas, why does it bother her so much that a few of them clean the executives' houses five days a week? All they are doing is maintaining the state's investments so that people won't complain when new houses must be built. And yes, free housing is necessary. My father doesn't earn as much as he could in the private sector; therefore, if we want anyone with any experience, we have two options: let them live in old houses for free, or pay them more money!

I firmly believe they should all get raises for the work they do. My father, for instance, travels to Austin weekly for meetings. (That's what all those vehicles are for! Imagine that! Maybe the reason they sit around unused most of the time is that they don't want people using them for personal trips.) Another part of his job is to give the orders for every execution in Texas. If that's not a high-pressure job, I don't know

Vote and show student voice in community

This letter is concerning some recent events within our community that students need to be aware of. I am running for College Station City Council. However, this letter is not a political advertisement. I wanted to spread the news about how some of our citizens view a student being involved in their community.

First, one of my opponents called me and told me I should drop out of the race because "I really don't have a chance to win." He continued by explaining to me that students "aren't organized and don't really care about city government." At this time I was somewhat livid, and I began to patronize him and thank him for his political insight. He sang the same song about our apathy.

It gets better! A lady wanted to confirm that I was the one that was running for city council. She then proceeded with an editorial about how this was "her city and the students only live here for a short time." She said, "you need to be involved in your hometown and let us be involved in ours." I was mad for obvious reasons. I was amused because a strong majority of citizens in "her city" are under 25 and because she doesn't realize the impact we have.

For the most part, citizens have been receptive to the idea of a student running for local office. However, there are many more people that think that it's none of our business. It is definitely our business, and we need to show that we care. Last year only 60 students voted on campus. Hiss! The election is on May 7. If you live on campus you can vote in the MSC. If you live off-campus give me a call and find out where to vote. Early voting is from April 18 until May 3. During this time, you can only vote at City Hall, next to Chili's on Texas Avenue. Regardless of who you vote for, please vote. We need to send a message that we care.

Jimmy Stathatos
Class of '94

