

The Battalion Editorial Board

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Find life's beauty in a world of words Poet uses language to create light in midst of darkness

Life is about learning. But beyond the mathematical equations and scientific calculations taught in the classroom, life teaches us the beauty of a sunset, the pain of love, the loyalty of a dog ...

Basically since the onset of written language, poets have tried to capture life's lessons with the magic of their lyrical language. Dr. Petrillo, an Italian professor at A&M, called the poetry of Jessie Holden Buttram a poetry about learning.

Petrillo, who will give a reading of Buttram's work tonight from her book, "Mostly My Going Is Up," said that the work creates a new perspective for subjects that have always existed.

Petrillo said, "If a poet cannot show us ancient traditions in a new light, then we don't need that writer."

But, Buttram's poetry was born of the world we live in today. Although Buttram is a writer during this post-modern era, her work does not possess the pessimistic undertones that are found in much of post-modern poetry.

As the title, "Mostly My Going Is Up," denotes, the collection is not about the hopeless condition of the world. The book contains poems ranging in subject matter from faith to learning to an appreciation of a humble childhood. Petrillo said Buttram's work proves that she wants to be heard on a wide spectrum of topics and that it is obvious she is constantly learning from them.

Although Buttram's work presents a positive perspective overall, she does not neglect delicate or emotionally difficult subjects.

"I do deal with a lot of painful things," Buttram said. "But, I try to find the positive

JENNY MAGEE

Columnist



in them."

It might have been easier for Buttram to have used her poetry as an outlet to vent her anger about the unfairness of her circumstances, as many post-modern writers do. She must have thought life unfair; she must have been angry at some point that a severe illness at age three robbed her of her sight.

But, Buttram's poetry isn't angry; it is curious. She is curious about the world around her - the way it smells, sounds, feels, tastes and the emotions that it gives her.

Petrillo said one of his main interests in Buttram's work is her use of all her senses. He said that one of the major facets of modern art is the lack of a barrier between the senses.

"Many people say that Kadinsky is painting words," he said. "Buttram can conjure up visual images that you can also hear."

In the poem "Darkness Calls," Buttram gives life to darkness through sound. "Darkness calls/ on moonless nights/ hiding everything/ except the sounds of motion."

Even though she uses sound to build the image of darkness, the description is visual as well. Buttram said a lot of people ask her

how her poetry is so visual.

She tells them, "I listen to what you say, and I see through your eyes."

There is something fluid about this world - the way streams run into rivers and rivers run into oceans is just one example that the world gives us of this never-ending intermingling in nature. It seems that there is a lesson to be learned in the way things are interwoven. Maybe understanding a part of the world is not enough to understand the whole.

A student who knew that Dr. Petrillo was giving a poetry reading asked him if the poet was Italian. The student assumed that because Dr. Petrillo is an Italian professor, he would be giving a reading of an Italian poet's work.

Many times in this world of increasing specialization, it is easy to get separated into spheres of specific knowledge. Even here at A&M, students attend classes for their major, hang out with the people of the same major and join organizations for their major.

Petrillo said, "It is important to recognize that all the aspects in the world are culturally inter-related - they are inseparable."

To learn, in the truest sense of the word, there should be no barriers. There should be no sphere of knowledge that can be called unrelated to our lives. There should be no aspect of this world to which we are blind.

Dr. Petrillo will be reading Jessie Holden Buttram's work tonight at eight o'clock in All Faiths Chapel.

Jenny Magee is a sophomore English and journalism major



EDITORIAL

Clearing the smoke Regulate tobacco industry

There is good news for smokers. According to the top executives of major tobacco companies, cigarettes are not addictive. The next time we see a friend having a "nic fit," we should spread the good news on to them. But many smokers already know what Congress will hopefully find out in its ongoing committee hearings on the issue of regulating the tobacco industry - nicotine is a drug.

Under pressure from Congress, the largest tobacco companies released a list of 599 additives that are used in cigarettes. The federal government says that the companies must produce a list of the more than 700 additives they use each year. That list has always been kept secret. Among the additives included on the recently released list are 13 additives not even allowed in food.

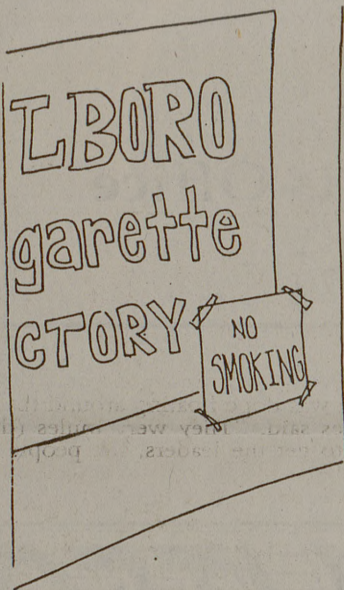
Although studies have shown that tobacco is not as harmful as illegal drugs, it is a drug nonetheless. It is time for the government to form a policy that properly deals with the tobacco industry.

The government estimates that 400,000 Americans die from cig-

arettes each year. If an industry with less power was the cause of so many deaths, the government would have done something long ago. Instead, tobacco is subsidized by the government, and the tobacco lobby in Washington, D.C., is one of the largest.

The Food and Drug Administration is looking at whether companies manipulate the amount of nicotine in cigarettes. If so, then nicotine will be considered a chemical drug. If they determine that it is a drug, then maybe the government will move its policy in one direction rather than trying to please both sides of the issue. It is ridiculous to subsidize tobacco on one hand and then tax it on the other. It is also unacceptable to require a list of cigarette ingredients and then not release that list in entirety to the public.

It would be foolish for the government to enter into a new era of health care without resolving its policy concerning tobacco. They can't please both sides forever, and they must deal with the facts - 400,000 of them each year.



Editorials appearing in The Battalion reflect the views of the editorial board. They do not necessarily reflect the opinions of other Battalion staff members, the Texas A&M student body, regents, administration, faculty or staff.

Columns, guest columns, cartoons and letters express the opinions of the authors.

The Battalion encourages letters to the editor and will print as many as space allows. Letters must be 300 words or less and include the author's name, class, and phone number.

We reserve the right to edit letters and guest columns for length, style, and accuracy.

Contact the opinion editor for information on submitting guest columns.

Address letters to:

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You can stop the presses, but time keeps on ticking ...

Watching Ron Howard's latest film, "The Paper," is a lot like watching a day in the life of the superheroes here at The Battalion. Why, just yesterday the managing editor slugged it out in the press room, punching the opinion editor in the nose after she pressed the BIG RED BUTTON to stop the noisy presses when we learned that the Corps was - contrary to recent stories - really a decent group after all.

Daily, we deal with life-and-death situations, protecting truth, justice and the Politically Correct way while juggling ethics, raving wives and state representatives. And all the while, we hear this incessant clock ticking from behind the screen - I mean from the hollows of our minds. Tick, tick, tick, tick, tick, tick, tick, tick ...

Actually, working here at the Batt isn't what most people might think. No, we don't sit around scratching our um, noggins, reading "Mein Kampf," wondering what kind of stories to make up for the day. Well, except for the city desk. They do that. And the sports desk. And lifestyles, of course. OK, and the opinion desk, too.

ROBERT VASQUEZ

Columnist



Most people don't realize that The Battalion - or any newspaper, for that matter - is not one jumble of information, but the combination of different sections ("desks") that work to provide the most accurate and interesting information that pertains to the readers. The city desk, for example, doesn't report on movies or bands touring through town. That story belongs to the lifestyles desk. And the sports desk doesn't report on the latest scandal to hit A&M. That story belongs to the city desk. Unless, of course, the scandal involves a sports team at A&M. But that would never happen.

I'm leaving The Battalion soon. So, before I go I'd like to show you around this

place. It's no Hall of Justice League, but it works OK as a Batt Cave. Follow me.

This big black metal monstrosity is the mailbox. This is where we're supposed to get letters from presidents and senators and other important people who shape our lives through political policy and excessive taxation. Instead, we usually get announcements about parties, softball games or canceled Batt meetings in these boxes. (That box lined with faux, leopard-print velvet and red fringe belongs to Frank Stanford. Don't ask.)

This is the Night News desk. This is where they make up all the headlines that everyone thinks the writers are irresponsible for. No, we don't create the BIG BLACK PRINT that labels our stories. Someone else gets paid for that. We write the little words.

Next to the night news desk is the photo desk. They're the ones who make the paper attract the reader's eye. Children don't read books without pictures. Adults aren't much better. This desk gets those shots that make people stop and think, "What the hell is that?"

Over there, under a big "Grease" poster, "Charlie's Angels" pictures and the Barney puzzle is the AggieLife desk. These people are experts on entertainment. They know what makes the heart of Aggieland tick. Tick, tick, tick, tick ...

Just yesterday the managing editor slugged it out in the press room, punching the opinion editor in the nose after she pressed The BIG RED BUTTON to stop the noisy presses.

That desk behind the shelves, next to the old green sofa that smells like Brut is the Sports desk. That's the place where guys gather and grovel in testosterone. OK, and some of the girls grovel, too. The sports desk sometimes serves as the training ground for the Opinion desk. Some of our best columnists come from this desk.

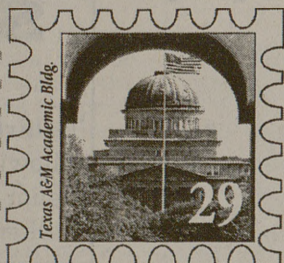
City desk is where all the aspiring journalists go. There, they train in covert surveillance and subversive interviewing techniques. These writers must have strong and wild imaginations to better prepare them for the stories they will have to make up. All the quotes, all the facts they report: figments. Fantastic figments of their imagination.

Yes, this is The Battalion, a place where people go when they have comments, complaints or deadlines hanging over their heads. The menagerie of people who come to this place would surprise you. We see people who want to inform the public of some event. We see people who want to find out what's happening in the world. We see stark-raving maniacs who want to stain the world with their crazed, demented, propagandistic opinions. And that's just the people who work here.

It's a crazy place. And it will soon be a part of my past. And the clock keeps ticking ...

Robert Vasquez is a senior journalism major

Mail Call



Adoption editorial highlights problem

I commend The Battalion for its attention to the question of transracial adoptions. As the April 12 editorial correctly noted, Texas now has a law which prohibits discrimination of adoptive parents solely on the basis of race. As a member of the Board of Protective and Regulatory Services (a new agency responsible for Child Protective Services since 1992), my colleagues and I approved revised policies and practices which reflect the new Texas law. Your edito-

rial highlights the very real difference of opinion on this subject, as evidenced by an ongoing opposition to transracial adoption from several quarters. In my view, however, we must keep the best interest of the child or children involved uppermost in our minds as we make decisions about their future.

Finding a good, permanent home for all children who come into our care is our first goal. Some 10,000 children in Texas are in foster care for varying lengths of time. Some will stay only a short while and return to their families. About 600 are adopted each year; others will remain in our care for years. DPRS now encourages its case-

workers to begin "permanency planning" as soon as a child comes into care, not after that child has been in the "system" for some time. We also actively recruit minority foster and adoptive parents so the case-workers will have more options for placement.

While the foster care system is not perfect, most foster parents provide loving care to any child who comes into their home, whatever their race or the race of the child. Often, they must spend their own money on these children, since the state does not provide adequate funds for reimbursement of expenses.

We want to find ways to get children into permanent situations as quickly as possible, whether that is a reunion with their own family or some other option. Our children are our future. As the agency in Texas charged with protecting them, I assure you we are always looking for ways to improve their lives.

Penny Beaumont
Member, Board of Protective and Regulatory Services

Whoopstock needs audience interaction

As a two year participant of the Whoopstock Unity Fest, I feel that this is an event worthy to go on as an Aggie tradition. It promotes togetherness, pride and fun - important components of the Aggie Spirit. Like everyone else, I was disappointed with the turnout this year. However, after talking to people I found out that many did not hear anything about it. The solution for next year, my friends, is publicity. Push Whoopstock until everyone knows when, where and why.

Here are some suggestions for next year. First, there should be more audience interaction. By coordinating with the Ols and Fish Camp, I am sure that you can come up with something to encourage mingling. Next, the performers should encourage audience participation. For example, Yasmine, the belly-dancer, could have taught us some basic dance steps to do while the International Music Club was performing. Also, a

rousing rendition of "The Cotton-eyed Joe" or "The Hokey Pokey" would have been fun and uplifting. Finally, I would suggest having a showcase of foods from different cultures. Organizations could provide food representing their cultures, and then (for a fee, of course) students can eat their way around the world! The possibilities are endless! Think about it and start planning now!

Harvonya Perkins
Class of '92

Thanks to students

Many thanks to all the A&M students who gave of their valuable time for the Big Event to clean up Brazos County. I especially want to thank the students who worked in the College Station City Cemetery. The A&M Garden Club has had the cemetery as a yearly project for many years. We do appreciate all the students who gave of their time.

Eileen Kramer
Member A&M Garden Club