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SINGAPORE'S SYSTEM IS SO SWIFT AND SURE; CURS IS SO MESSY AND COMPROMISING.

EDITORIAL

Don't get conned Get-rich scheme hurts students

The latest get-rich scheme to hit campus is fraudulent, unethical and illegal. The students who started it may never be caught, but hopefully the public has become aware of the fraud and will be more careful in the future.

Much like a chain-mail scheme, this con operates by getting people to buy into a "pyramid" by offering them the chance to make a \$900 return. The new member then is to recruit others to join on the next level of the pyramid. One unidentified student said it became the thing to do as more and more people joined.

The chain becomes endless, and everyone loses. The only hope to make any money back is to con other people.

People who start such a scheme are worse than thieves. They are people too cowardly to even look the people on the last tier of the pyramid in the eye — the people who lose the most. Rather, they rely on students to spread the fraud on to their friends who in turn do the same.

Taking part in such a scheme is also illegal. Because it is a private circulation of money, Texas law treats such chain activity as a class B misdemeanor which is punishable by up to a \$1,500 fine and a jail term of up to six months.

This punishment can be assessed for many gambling crimes we think are legal, such as gambling pools for major sporting events. It is illegal to have poker games where large amounts of money are risked by participants. Most Texans are not educated about such laws, but it only takes a sense of decency to realize that starting this sort of scheme is wrong.

No fraud is more deserving of a punishment than a scheme like this one which takes advantage of so many people. Not everyone who takes part in the scheme is a criminal. Many of the people involved are victims. But the people who started the pyramid managed to fail the Aggie Code in one sweep. They've lied, cheated, stolen and manipulated others into doing the same.

Images abound in French Quarter Night in Big Easy brings out all kinds of characters

ROY L. CLAY

Columnist



It was a night to end all nights. Before gearing up for the Hell-on-Earth we know as finals, a few friends decided to take a road trip which for some of us was to be the last of our college careers. We intended to make the best of it, and we did.

After spending the day at the New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Festival, everyone opted to spend time downtown. What started as a simple evening in the French Quarter became a magical tour through the South's most fantastic city.

Perhaps it was simply a long day in the sun or the oddball feeling you get when you've stayed awake longer than your body thinks prudent, but for one night New Orleans became the culmination of my education, a kind of stomping ground for the imagination — mine flowed with reckless abandon throughout our trip.

We walked past St. Louis Cathedral — between the church and Jackson Square. Most of the human activity was centered around the bars and dance joints, so the less intoxicating parts of the city were absent of all but the homeless and the curious. We roamed down the alley that runs alongside the St. Louis and admired the same view of the church's quiet tree-shrouded garden that William Faulkner once enjoyed.

In the dark alleys where the sounds of drunken revelry are a distant clamor and dead men vault the rooftops, there stood a man in the shadows of a garden entrance. His golden hair flowing over the collar of his well-tailored suit and surrounded the piercing blue eyes that fell on us with a ravens look. Almost unnoticed was the beautiful little girl that stood slightly behind him. She too gazed at us with intent longing, but was it a look of jealousy — or hunger?

As we turned the corner, I tore my gaze from the two odd creatures. I heard a soft little voice say, "Au revoir." I looked back only to see only mist in the doorway.

The Napoleon House is a restaurant on Rue St. Charles where we stopped to eat. It was a dark place with a quiet inner courtyard, the kind of place you would expect to find in the French Quarter. The waiter was a thin man in his late 30s who refused to bring us cheese platters and served nothing but salty margaritas. His demeanor was that of a smug Parisian waiter — only his accent denoted his relation to the New World.

After spending much of the meal annoying our entire party, which I'm sure he found inanely Texan, he began arguing with an obese man wearing a dirty hunting cap trying to sell hot dogs to customers situated near the open French doors. The altercation only infuriated the large weenie-wielding man who began to loudly proclaim Napoleon would not have approved of the waiter's demeanor. The late Emperor, he said, would not have

hesitated to destroy such a foul peasant.

We escaped the evening meal with only one of our number becoming violently ill and began our stroll through the dimly-lit streets, looking at various historical landmarks littering that section of the city.

After combing the Quarter for awhile, we decided on a detour to celebrate the birthday of another of our tribe. By this time a gentleman who had experienced the technical yawn earlier had revived and enthusiastically agreed to stop for liquid refreshments.

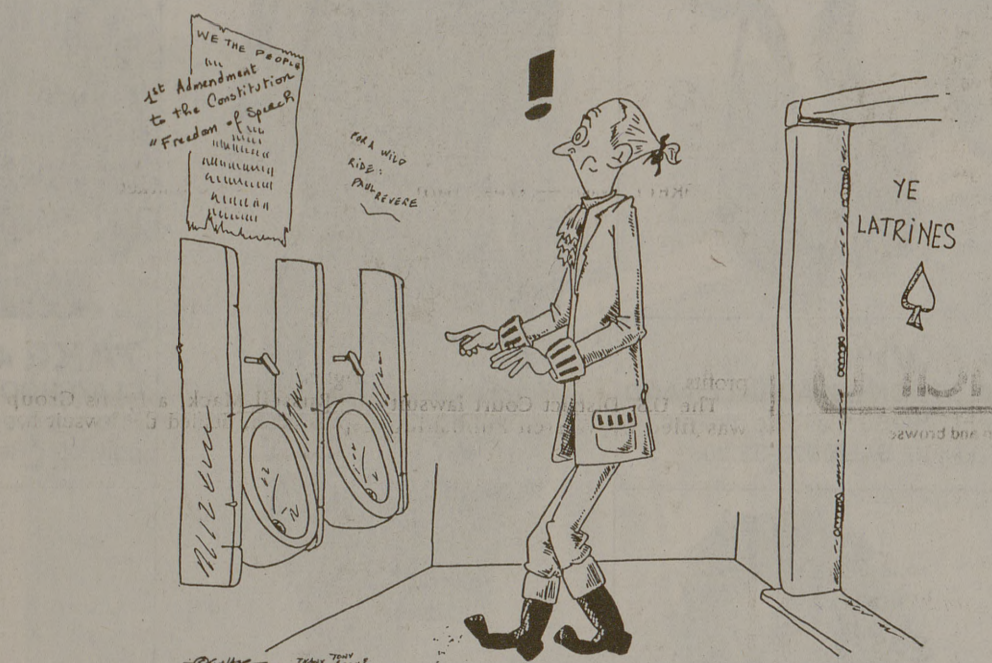
We arrived at a small bistro just west of the French Market. It lacked the excitement and energy of more popular establishments in the Quarter but served our purposes well. There were small groups of people talking quietly, and the waiters sat watching the patrons with somnolent eyes. The music was not loud. It mustn't be too loud.

We talked quietly amongst ourselves, enjoying the cool quite of the evening. We all sat savoring the peace of a clean well-lighted place where nada mattered except the soft breeze in the trees and the company of friends.

That night in New Orleans ended, as most fine memories do, but it was a highlight of my college career — in large part due to the company, but also because of the particular flavor my imagination gave to the evening.

I have no money. But that one night among my dearest friends, I was a truly wealthy man.

Roy L. Clay is a senior history major



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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.

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Find more productive means than graffiti to voice ideas

Bathroom wall graffiti often says a lot about our culture's beliefs, and the way people perceive the world in which they live.

I find it rather entertaining to go into the bathroom and read a debate on political parties, abortion or feminism. In a town that is shamefully devoid of quality alternative publications; I regard bathroom wall graffiti as sort of "the common student's newspaper." In a twisted sort of way, bathroom wall graffiti proves people at least care about current issues — that they have an opinion. Of course I have wondered if these women (I have only been able to study female restrooms) who take the time to dig a pen or marker out of their purses and write their beliefs on the wall actually vote in elections.

Because I spend a large part of my time in the Reed McDonald Building, I witnessed growing political battle in the second stall of basement bathroom. It all started around election time last year. "Perot for President in '92 Period. Period." was written in blue pen next to "Bush needs to go."

This political debate evolved this year with lengthy remarks either praising or

JENNY MAGEE

Columnist



lambasting the Clinton administration's focus on universal health care. I guess many people felt compelled to share their opinions on the subject, because the door was almost completely filled with writing.

A couple of weeks ago, I went into this bathroom stall to find the door had been scrubbed clean. The graffiti was barely visible. The ideas, the outrage and controversy had faded like a finished argument.

That is part of the reason I was so surprised the next time I went into this bathroom stall to read, "Cleaning this wall is a violation of our first amendment rights." And a couple of days later these comments appeared: "Free speech, yea!" and "A&M doesn't want the 'other' sides message to be anywhere."

When I memorized the first amendment in junior high school, I do not remember there being anything in that famous passage giving American citizens the freedom to write on bathroom walls.

Actually, defacing property is a crime. The bathroom walls in this university belong to Texas A&M, which has a much greater right to clean them than students have to write on them.

If people really feel strong enough about an issue to spend time writing their opinion on the wall, it seems their opinion would have a more permanent impact if they did something like vote in political elections, organize a rally, write their congressman or join one of the A&M political organizations. Writing on bathroom walls says a lot less than taking real political actions.

Something else struck me as off-base about the idea that cleaning the bathroom wall was a violation of someone's first amendment rights. Freedom of speech and freedom of the press give American citizens the right to say or write whatever they want; however, those freedoms do not include the right to be heard or agreed with.

Realistically, any American citizen can stand out in the street for as long as they want and tell the world every opinion they have, but that doesn't mean anybody will listen to them.

Freedom of speech and freedom of the press give American citizens the right to say or write whatever they want. Those freedoms do not include the right to be heard or agreed with.

Because a large majority of Americans have absolutely no idea what it is like to live in a country where rights like freedom of speech do not exist, we often either take our rights for granted or expect too much from them.

In the recent elections in Italy, the Italians were upset because they only had an 85 percent voter turn-out and in most normal elections in Italy, 90 to 95 percent of

Italians vote. In the United States, it would be an absolute miracle if we could get 50 percent of the citizens to vote all the time.

The funny thing is, I do not think Americans don't vote because they don't like politics. Just go to any family get-together dinner and you'll know that is not the case.

People feel helpless. They feel like the government doesn't care about what they think.

But, there is hope. If people are willing to write their opinion on the bathroom wall, at least they are showing they have something to say. They have ideas about how this country should be run. What people need to realize is just because the first amendment does not guarantee us the right to be heard, that does not mean we should stop speaking out about the things on which we feel strongly. Sometimes the door gets washed, the debate ends unresolved or the government appears to be deaf, but that is no reason to stop trying.

Jenny Magee is a sophomore English and journalism major

Mail Call



On Parents' Weekend

• Three Cheers for Parents' Weekend! We attended with our freshman daughter, and I was expecting an "OK" weekend, but now, we were impressed!

Cheer #1 goes to the Variety Show. Very well done and with professional class. I haven't laughed so much in a long time.

Cheer #2 goes to the Pi Beta Phi reception/skit and Barbecue. The girls demonstrated true Aggie spirit and talent beyond their years. It was also a time of skilled and genuine hospitality.

Cheer #3 goes to the Corps of Cadets. The Review and Awards was a time of swelling pride not only in the Aggies but also for America and what it can once again become through guys like those in the Corps. Good job! Reminded me of my Air Force days.

I wonder how many other parents who hail from other universities (like me) were "sold" this past weekend on the Aggie approach to things. I think I've caught the spirit.

Art Mullan
Tyler

• This past weekend Texas A&M celebrated the annual "Parents Weekend." Our parents come to visit their loving children for many reasons: to see their dorm rooms, to view classrooms, to observe Aggie traditions, and to eat lunch with their little Aggies at the dining halls of Texas A&M. Now we students say to ourselves, "Finally, our parents get to see what we go through each day and eat the mouth-watering food of Sbsa."

But no, What's this on a glorious Sunday noon? Not the normal Sbsa, but a beautiful banquet of food. Silverware wrapped in napkins, pans of food not normally seen, not to mention the glorious ice sculpture with chilled fruit beneath.

Here we are complaining to our parents about the cafeteria food and when they come, they see this beautiful banquet. Most parents trust their children to tell the truth, but some may have gotten a false impression and left confused or bewildered on what their children really get for their meal plans. After all, most

parents pay for their children's meals anyway — so why not get what you pay for? Isn't this why parents weekend is celebrated, to let them observe how their children survive as Aggies? Don't you think that a false image of our campus cafeterias were given? Well, we definitely do.

Naomi Berger
Class of '97

Terri Wood
Class of '97

Muster Committee, speaker outstanding

I am writing in reference to the outstanding job the Muster Committee did with this year's muster. I am especially appreciative that Dr. Andres Tijerina was chosen to be the guest speaker. His speech emotionally touched me because I, too, had his thoughts when I arrived on this campus as a "fish" in the Cadet Corps.

Dr. Tijerina's spirit and love for this university is what being an Aggie is all about.

Again, many thanks to the Muster Committee for their continued excellence in preserving this precious tradition of ours.

Gig 'em.

Juan Cruz
Class of '93

About the alien thing

This is a letter to the guy who draws the comic strip that has that alien bean-shaped thing:

Hey man, you are not very funny.

Demian Vieira de Souza
Class of '92