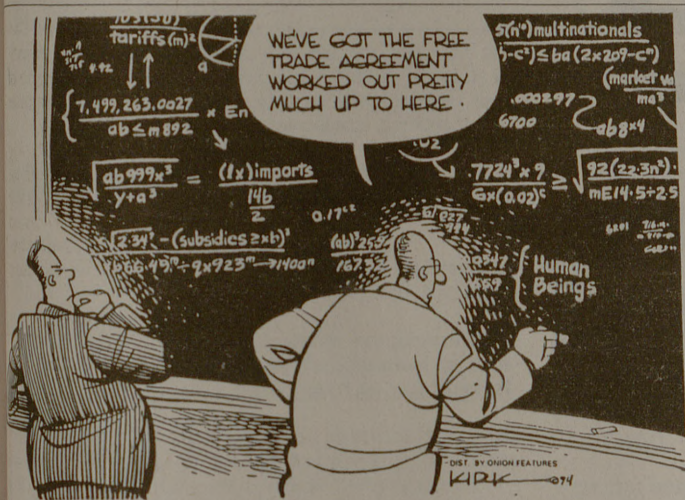


Opinion

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EDITORIAL

It's about time

South African black vote overdue

The times, they are a-changin'. History is being made in the racially-divided country of South Africa, where for the first time black South Africans have been allowed to vote in national elections. This is the first time blacks have been able to vote since whites first took control of the country 342 years ago. Last Tuesday, voting began for the aged, the military, and for people in hospitals. Despite four-hour waits in the sun, sick and elderly patients fainting, and late-arriving ballots, the mood among black voters was triumphant. Wednesday marked the official beginning of general voting, with Nelson Mandela and F.W. de Klerk casting ballots. Remarkably, over five million whites and 35 million blacks, browns and Asians are all voting in the same elections. African National Congress leader Nelson Mandela is expected to win around 60 percent of the vote with de Klerk's National Party receiving the second-highest percentage. If the final results correspond with these predic-

tions, Mandela will be sworn in as president of a truly democratic South African government on May 10. The hope is that Mandela can bring together a deeply divided country, with illiteracy and unemployment rates of over 50 percent among blacks. No other power can solve South Africa's problems or address its needs - the South African people must willingly help themselves. There won't be an overnight change of the way of life for most of the people who vote, but they are taking a much-needed step toward a future of which they are finally exerting control. The free world should be happy that another country will be able to enjoy the basic privileges too often taken for granted. Americans should learn a lesson from the people of South Africa. In reference to the widespread jubilation, one radio caller commented, "I never thought I would see the day when I wish I was a black person." The times are a-changin', and it's definitely about time.

The people who make it an education Faculty should be lauded for teaching as well as research

MELISSA MEGLIOLA

Columnist



The engineering departments at most universities are notorious for stressing research over undergraduate teaching. A&M is no different. Professors are granted tenure and given promotions depending on the amount of research they do, the number of papers they write and the amount of money they bring in to their departments. You can tell exactly who is bringing in the big bucks by wandering around the halls of Zachry, Bright and Richardson. Small interior offices mark inhabitants who write only a paper here and there. Offices with a window denote faculty members who write books, papers and documents rivaling the Constitution in importance.

While such prioritization can no doubt be justified with dollar signs, I have to wonder where we, the students, fit in. Are we really the reason A&M seeks out top names for its faculty, or are we just the front for a larger, more lucrative business?

Research is good. Cures for deadly diseases are found by thousands of hours of experimentation. Modern technology advances only at the rate of research and invention. And certainly students benefit from being surrounded by cutting-edge technology. But someone has to teach us the basics before we can assist with or even understand much of the research being done here on campus.

At the freshman orientation conferences each summer, department heads, deans and advisors meet with inquisitive, nervous and naive parents. They inform these parents - eager to grasp onto any indication that their life savings are about to be well spent - about A&M's commitment to undergraduate teaching. Courses are not taught by graduate students but by dedicated professors whose primary goals are to provide intellectual

guidance to the thousands of young, bright students that make up our engineering department each year. They show overheads with pie charts, quote statistics on teaching budgets and brag about teachers who are popular with students.

Yet, those faculty members who spend more time teaching than working to raise money for the department get stuck in non-tenure track positions. It's true that such professors know the rules of the academic game when they choose not to do research, but it is sad to think teachers have no place in the University environment. Job security for lecturers is definitely not guaranteed. The future of one of my best-ever professors is currently up in the air as the civil engineering department wants to replace him with a tenure track professor, a decision that on the surface makes sense but in actuality would be a great loss for the department.

Not everything the administrators tell our parents is a lie. They simply take credit for the unacknowledged and unsupported goodwill of A&M professors. Many professors, at least in my department, are genuinely concerned with undergraduate teaching and with their students. I am constantly amazed by how much my professors are willing to do for their students.

When I cracked the oil pan in my car last

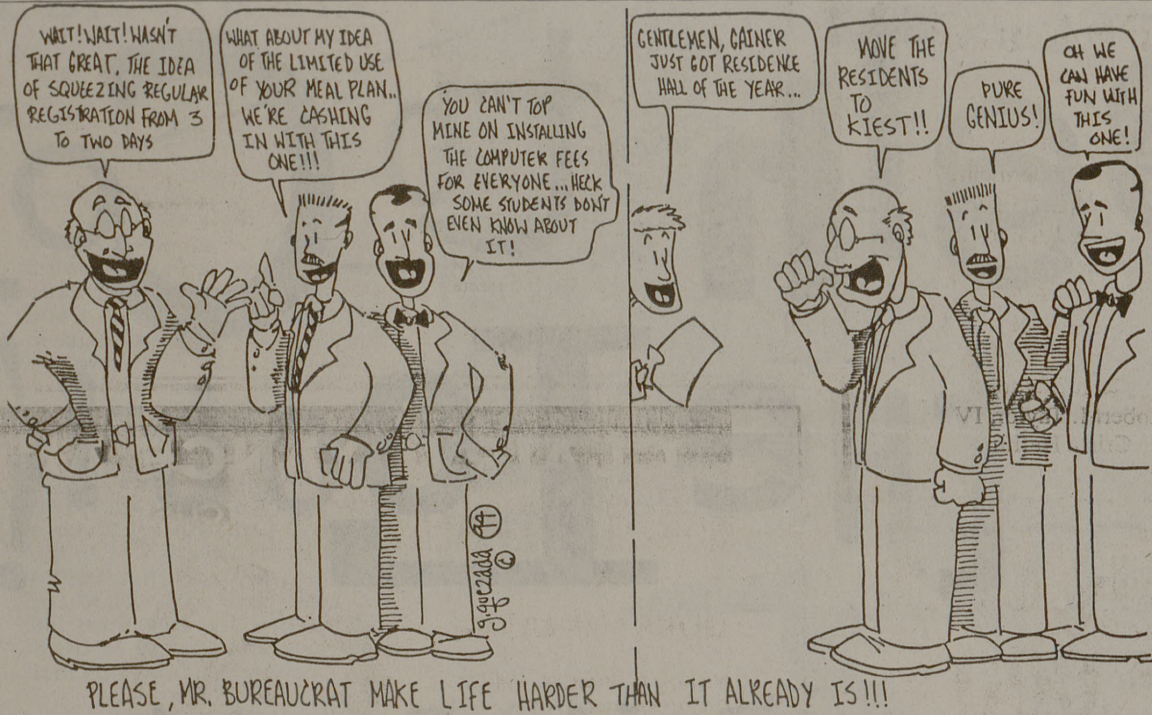
week - and in my state of stress whined to anyone who would listen - two of my professors offered to call the dealership and make sure I wasn't being taken advantage of for being a mechanically-clueless female. Another professor volunteered to take my badly fraying backpack home and sew it up on his wife's industrial sewing machine. I have been invited to the homes of three of my professors for different picnics and parties.

The night before a test over some particularly confusing material, one of my professors held a question and answer review session that lasted from 7 until 11:30. One Monday night, when faculty members could have been at home spending time with their families, six or seven of my professors met with students to discuss opportunities for graduate school. They offered valuable advice on finding funding, taking the GRE and choosing schools.

Perhaps my favorite story is when, after reading my complaints about being a college student and longing for preschool, my professor and his graduate student brought Popsicles for the entire class - the good kind, with rainbow flavors.

Some of my professors are leading researchers, writers and publishers in manufacturing, operations research, and human factors. All of them are vital to the industrial engineering department. They are why we value our A&M education. In 20 years, when we send our children to college, we will think of Texas A&M not for its outstanding researchers but for its faculty members who reassured us when we had doubts, tutored us when we had trouble understanding, and celebrated with us when we achieved.

Melissa Megliola is a senior industrial engineering major



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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Still crazy after all these years ... one more for the road

So. This is goodbye. It seems like forever Robert Vasquez has been "a senior journalism major." Today is the last time I'll ever see that description in print. Nearly three years ago, I walked into The Battalion office, writing samples in hand, and applied for a job as columnist. I'd never written for a paper before, not even in high school. But I figured it was worth a try. "We're not going to be able to hire you," the editor told me. "Your writing is OK, but we have much better writers with more experience this semester. Thank you for applying. Maybe next time." Driving home, I listed the reasons why I really didn't want to write for The Battalion anyway. Two weeks after the hiring had been done, and all the cocky new columnists were firmly in place, I took another story I had written down to the Batt. The editor thanked me and said, "We'll call you if we're interested." I smiled and thanked him. Walking away, I rolled my eyes, thinking,

ROBERT VASQUEZ

Columnist



"They'll never call." Two days later, they called. Since then, working at the Batt has introduced me to a large number - and a wide variety - of people. I've made a lot of friends. And a few enemies. When I wrote about my mother's trip to the hospital, I received cards, letters, phone calls and countless personal inquiries as to how she was doing. The concern, the encouraging words expressed by people I'd never met convinced me of the spirit of people on this campus more than any song or yell or tall tale ever could. (I've relayed the messages to my mother, who has recovered completely and will be

here next Friday when I walk across the stage to receive my diploma. For your prayers, she thanks you. I thank you.) Walking through the French Quarter in New Orleans recently, I noticed a print of a painting by Dali. It looked like a woman's face at first. But as I looked closer, I saw that the woman's right eye was really a toppled vase. Her other eye was a small child sleeping on a bare floor. Further study of the work revealed other hidden features that were not apparent from a casual glance. Dali, among others, had a talent for seeing the deeper meanings that are always there, but rarely seen. For what it's worth, I offer you these words. They've helped me in times when there seemed no logic or purpose in this world. Written long ago, the following poem, entitled "Desiderata," may seem a little outdated. Try to look beyond the shades of syntax and the diction that have shifted as the years have passed. There's a message, a meaning buried in there. I hope you find it in this poem. I

hope you find it somewhere. Goodbye. Keep peace with your soul. With all its shams, drudgery and broken dreams, it is still a beautiful world. Be cheerful. Strive to be happy. - from "Desiderata"

Go placidly amid the noise and the haste and remember what peace there may be in silence. As far as possible without surrender be on good terms with all persons. Speak your truth quietly and clearly, and listen to others, even the dull and ignorant; they too have their story. Avoid loud and aggressive persons, they are vexations to the spirit. If you compare yourself to others you may become vain and bitter, for always there will be greater and lesser persons than yourself. Enjoy your achievements as well as your plans. Keep interested in your career however humble; it

is a real possession in the changing fortunes of time. Exercise caution in your business affairs, for the world is full of trickery. But let this not blind you to what virtue there is; many persons strive for high ideals, and everywhere life is full of heroism. Be yourself, especially do not feign affection. Neither be cynical about love; for in the face of all aridity and disenchantment it is as perennial as the grass. Take kindly the counsel of the years, gracefully surrendering the things of youth. Nurture the strength of spirit to shield you in sudden misfortune. But do not distress yourself with imaginings. Many fears are born of fatigue and loneliness. Beyond a wholesome discipline, be gentle with yourself. You are a child of the universe, no less than the trees and the stars; you have a right to be here. And whether or not it is clear to you, no doubt the universe is unfolding as it should. Therefore be at peace with God, whatever you conceive Him to be; and whatever your labors and aspirations, in the noisy confusion of life, keep peace with your soul. With all its shams, drudgery and broken dreams, it is still a beautiful world. Be cheerful. Strive to be happy.

Robert Vasquez is a senior journalism major

Mail Call

Save Gainer Hall

The Wells Hall Council and residents would like to express their support of Gainer Hall and its residents. Gainer has only been open two years, but has proven itself to be one of the most outstanding residence halls on campus. Wednesday, April 27, Gainer won a total of seven awards from the Residence Hall Association including Most Outstanding Programming, the Community Service Award, and most importantly Hall of the Year for 1993-1994. Gainer has an incredi-

ble sense of community spirit as seen by the above awards. This is something that is very difficult to achieve and would be lost if these women were forced to move into different halls or off campus. We would like to make it clear that we are not anti-Corps; we are simply pro-Gainer. Kiest Hall, of which the top three floors are being given to the residents of Gainer, would adequately fulfill the needs of the Corps for next year. Furthermore, there would not be the awkward situation of having the Corps (mostly male) occupy the first floor of a female hall. Wells encourages everyone to express their support of the residents of Gainer by calling Dr.

Malon Southerland, Vice President of Student Affairs, at 845-4728. SAVE GAINER!
Craig A. Gordon
Class of '93, President Wells Hall
Accompanied by 22 signatures

Quit your whining

In response to the editorial on April 28 (about over-priced apartments): Grow up and quit whining. This is just another example of liberals expecting the government (or in this case the University administration) to take care of everybody's problems. In case you haven't noticed, America is based on a free market economy. Apartment owners are not here to make students' lives easier; they are here to make profit. I think if you do some price checking in other college towns you will find that prices here are about the same or low-

er than in cities such as Austin or Dallas. If you think that prices are high and people in a position of power are conspiring to make your life miserable, then vote with your feet and take a hike. Or better yet, why don't you ask Clinton if he can provide free housing.

Will the real line-drawer step forward

In his guest column, James Harrington erred in his portrayal of the line in the sand myth. William B. Travis, not Jim Bowie, drew the line in the sand. Travis and Bowie were co-commanders until Bowie was injured in an accident and turned over full command to Travis. The line in the sand incident occurred after this. Jim Bowie was bedridden and asked to have his cot carried

across the line. Learn the myths correctly before you put them down.
David R. Webb
Class of '93

Calculating an Aggie

I would like to say thanks to a great senior who personifies the real Aggie spirit. I met Chris in the Beutel waiting room the day of my Chem lab final. We both had been waiting for over two hours, when I realized I had forgotten my calculator. I thought I was going to have to forfeit my turn to see the doctor so I could have time to get my calculator. However, Chris, a complete stranger, offered me the use of his calculator and I was able to see the doctor and be on time for my final. Chris, you are a lifesaver and one great Ag!
Leslie Calderon
Class of '97