

Still Smoking...

As President Clinton's cigarette tax looms, aiming to hike a pack of cigarettes by \$1.25, A&M students consider how much they can really afford to light up

Jeremy Keddle
THE BATTALION

Ask Andrew Chen about the proposed tax increase on cigarettes, and he just shakes his head. Three years and still smoking, the junior civil engineering major lights up and inhales.

"No matter what price the members of government propose, I plan to keep on smoking," Chen said.

However, Chen — who smokes a pack per day — claims to be a borderline socialist and thinks this tax is great. "The more they raise the tax on cigarettes, the less I'll spend on other things," Chen said referring to leisure-related items.

Dr. Thomas Blaine, a consumer economist with Texas A&M's Department of Recreation, Park and Tourism Sciences, offered a possible explanation of Chen's reaction. "Smokers tend to deny they respond to price

changes," Blaine said. "Many times they aren't sure how they will respond to a price increase until a price change actually occurs."

Blaine, an expert in domestic cigarette consumption, said for every percent increase in price, there is a half-percent decrease in consumption.

"If the price rose to over three dollars per pack, there's no question that there would be a certain cut-back among smokers," said Blaine.

The current proposal, which would add \$1.25 per pack, may be decided by the U.S. House of Representatives Ways and Means Committee this month. Should the increase in cigarette tax be approved, the price of cigarettes would rise to just more than \$3 per pack.

U.S. Representative Jack Fields takes exception to the proposed tax and President Bill Clinton's health care reform plan, in which the tax is included.

"We don't need a new dramatic health care reform. We need to fix a few of the problems," Fields said. He would not support any new tax preferring to reform health insurance.

Chad Walter, president of Aggie

Republicans, supports Field's view.

"If we raise taxes on cigarettes because they raise health care costs, we must also tax other items which drive up health care costs in order to be consistent with the philosophy," Walter said. Walter sarcastically recommended taxing liquor, peanuts, and people who do not exercise.

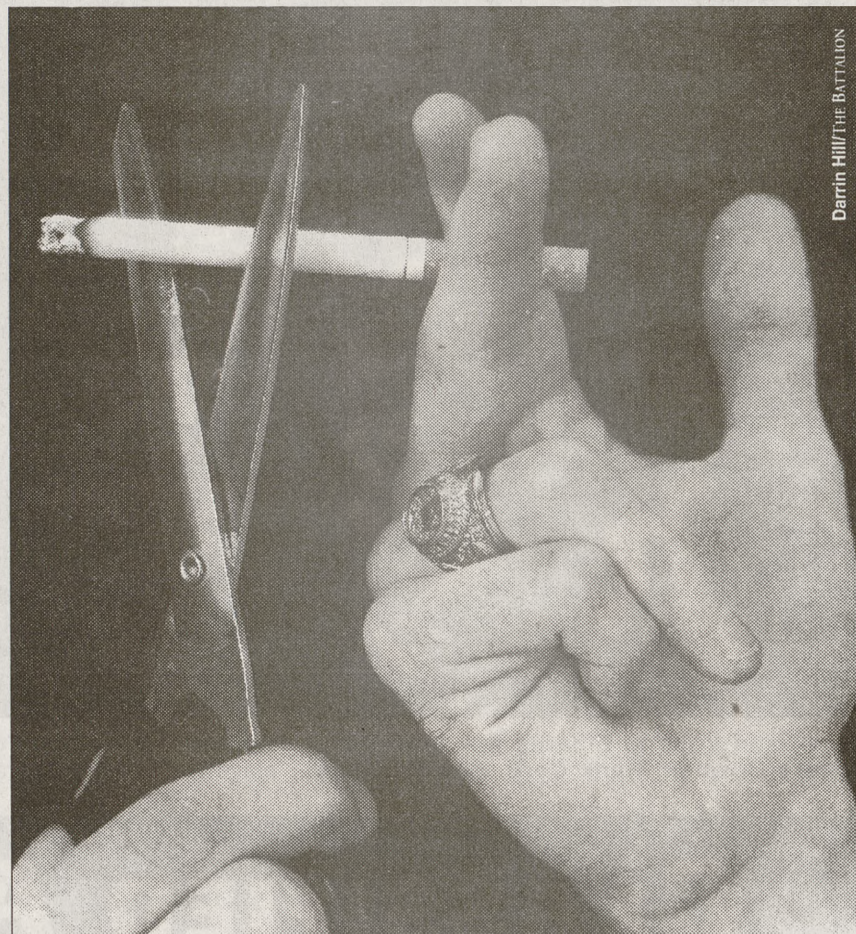
"As Republicans, we believe people should be empowered to make their own consumer decisions," Walter said, "And when we give government more power, we give up personal freedom."

Jorge Uceda, a junior accounting major, didn't wait for government to "take away his freedom." Instead, he chose to quit six months ago because of a realization of health hazards.

"I see the proposed smoking tax as an incentive for people to quit, and view the tax as a positive proposal should it benefit the health of society," Uceda said.

In a report by Healthy Aggies 2000, a committee to improve the health and wellness of the A&M campus, only 9 percent of on-campus students reported they smoke. The survey was distributed to 3808 students living in the residence halls last year. Of those students, 1175 responded anonymously.

However, Kindell Peters, graduate assistant at the Health Education Cen-



Darrin Hill/THE BATTALION

ter and facilitator for the Healthy Aggies 2000, said the results do have a few biases. In the survey, twice as many females responded compared to males, and more sophomores and seniors responded than other classifications.

"There are a few misrepresentations here and there, but overall the study serves as a beginning measurement to generalize for on-campus students," Peters said.

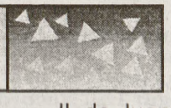
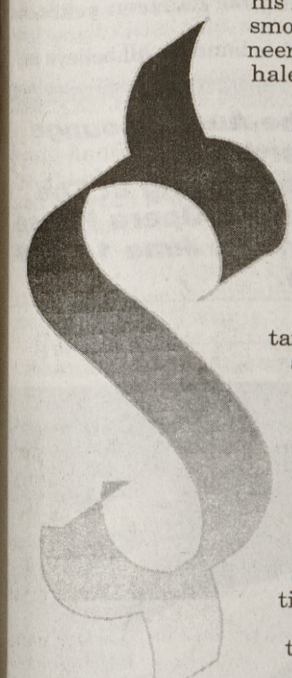
The smoking of students at A&M

compared to results released from the Center for Disease Control are dramatically different.

According to Disease Control, 25.5 percent of the population age 18-25 smoked during 1993.

And Dr. Kenneth Dirks, director of the Student Health Center, said fewer A&M students smoke because of their higher education level.

"I believe that most Aggies are smart enough not to smoke," Dirks said.



JL de Juan

THE BIGGER, THE BETTER

At the Country Inn, good food is more than just a challenge

Christi Erwin
THE BATTALION

As the saying goes, everything is big in Texas. If no place else, this is true at the Country Inn on Highway 36 in Somerville.

It is no tall tale that the Country Inn serves some of the biggest steaks in Texas.

The "extra-small" steak weighs at least 1.5 pounds, and the sizes increase up to the "large" weighing 3 to 3.5 pounds.

The Country Inn, which is less than 30 minutes from Bryan-College Station, also boasts of its large menu of sandwiches, hamburgers and seafood dishes.

Owner Eddie Archer, who bought the restaurant 10 years ago, said he serves large portions because he wants to avoid anyone walking out the door hungry.

"Almost everyone leaves with some food to take home," he said.

People from all over Texas make special trips to eat at the Country Inn, Archer said.

"I know a lady who travels from Austin once a week to eat fish," he said. "And others traveling from Dallas to Houston will plan their route through Somerville just to eat here."

Shannon Reeves, a waitress at the Country Inn, said the notoriety of the Country Inn extends out-of-state. She stopped at a truck stop once in Oklahoma City, and a man inside asked where she was headed. When she said Somerville, he told her he knew of a great little steakhouse in Somerville, the Country Inn.

Although quite a coincidence, Reeves was not too surprised, because many of their customers are out-of-towners. "The majority of people during the day are regulars," Reeves said. "But the biggest majority at night are new people."

Archer said a reason for the Country Inn's popularity is its relaxed atmosphere.

"People feel more at ease when they eat here," he said.

"They can come in from the lake or wherever and still feel comfortable."

The relaxed atmosphere of the Country Inn is also

popular with A&M students and employees, Archer said.

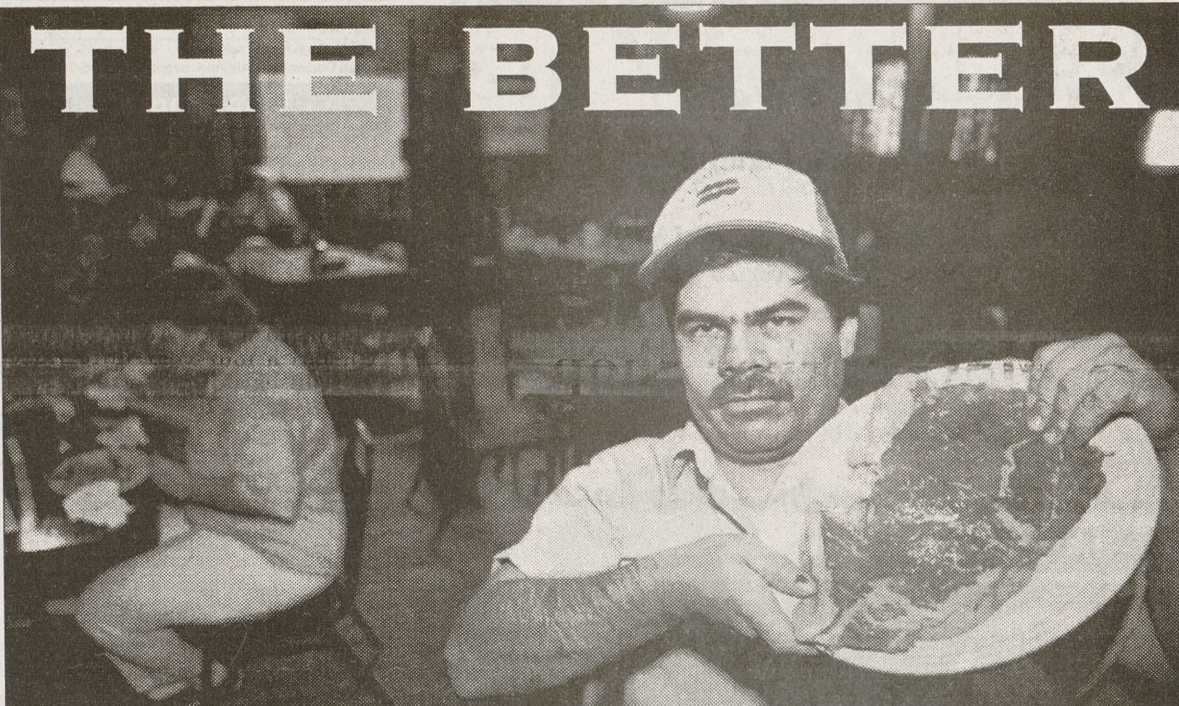
"Over the weekend, Aggies will bring their blankets and coolers," he said. "They talk and drink beer outside while they wait for a table."

Steve Smith, Class of '92, said he was extremely hungry when he first visited the Country Inn.

"I told the waitress I wanted a steak this big, as I showed her the size with my hands," he said. "She told me they didn't

"I told the waitress I wanted a steak this big ... (then) she told me they didn't come that small."

— Steve Smith, Class of '92



Darrin Hill/THE BATTALION

Bacilio Placio, a cook for the Somerville Country Inn shows off one of their famous steaks in the dining area. He has cooked for the Country Inn restaurant for more than seven years.

come that small."

"I was a little embarrassed, but I ordered a small steak and ate it all," he said.

Nathan Shilling, a senior business analysis major, said his boss introduced him to the Country Inn.

"I would never have stopped

to eat there," he said. "But the best I have ever eaten, and now I tell everyone to go."

Archer said due to the success of the Country Inn, he and co-owner Wade Miller opened another Country Inn in Brenham across from the fair-

grounds.

"So if you are interested in a plain, old-fashioned, family restaurant and can handle a little more noise, and eat quite a bit of food for your money," Archer said, "then the Country Inn is the place for you."

The Ties That Blind

With Father's Day coming up, the traditional tie takes on an unconventional appeal

WACO, (AP) — A necktie by any other name might still be equally uncomfortable. But a novelty necktie decorated with colorful characters might make some men less hasty to loosen their neckwear.

Neckties have received a bum rap for decades. Most men would prefer to leave them crammed in the closet, dangling on chairs or wrapped around anything but their necks.

But thanks to the unique characters on today's neckwear, men who once dusted off ties only for funerals or job interviews are sporting them daily with jeans and sports coats.

Novelty neckties have caught on as a fashion statement because they gave a chance to express who he is, said Sandra Salmen, advertising director of the New Orleans-based corporate headquarters of Wemco, the largest manufacturer of ties.

"If you buy one for yourself, you are saying, 'This is who I am,'" she said. "If you buy one for someone else, you are saying, 'This is who I think that person is.'"

Tabasco, a famous brand of hot sauce, was one of the first trademarks to be showcased on ties. Wemco, a manufacturer of the unique neckwear, has updated Tabasco ties

with eye-catching designs that are hard to distinguish as something that comes from a hot sauce bottle.

Even men who outgrew cartoons long ago don't mind wearing Disney favorite Mickey Mouse and Looney Tune characters Tweety Bird and Bugs Bunny on their chests. These ties have been popular for the last few years.

The latest thing in neckwear looks almost good enough to eat. McDonald's-themed ties are decorated with fries, burgers and other goodies. They come in a cardboard McDonald



Stew Milne/THE BATTALION

french fry box, but don't let that fool you — they are not edible. Like any fashion accessory,

there is a time and a place for novelty ties, said Carl Shamburger, menswear manager at Cox's Department Store. You wouldn't want to wear Mickey to a formal business meeting.

"We call it Friday dressing," said Shamburger who estimates that 35 percent of the store's neckwear sales are from novelty ties.

A novelty tie may not be such a bad idea for people who are stumped on what to get dad for Father's Day. Just this once, pops may not mind unwrapping a tie that says something about his lifestyle.

If he likes to help worthy causes, he might look forward to unwrapping an Endangered Species tie. Proceeds go to the American Association of Zoological Parks and Aquariums.

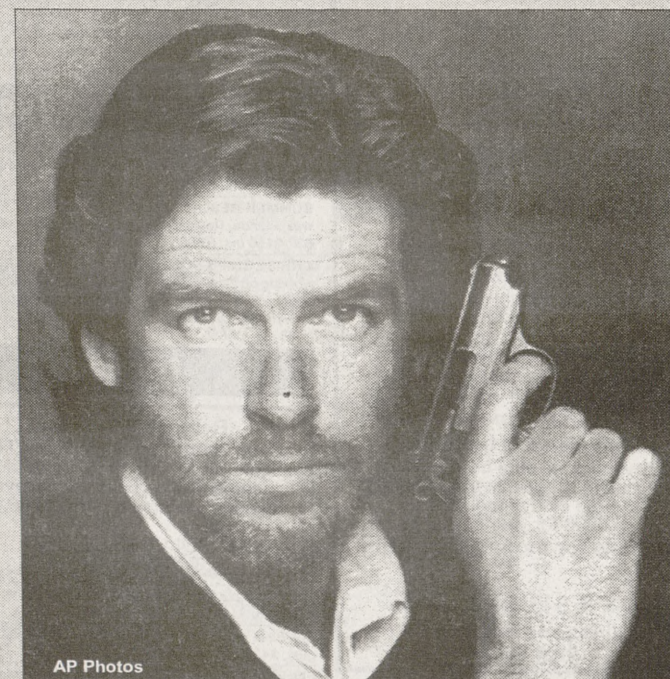
For men who sit in front of the tube every Monday night during football season, you probably can't go wrong with NFL Team neckwear.

If you can't find a tie that fits dear old dad's personality, Wemco has come out with a "Design a Tie for Dad" kit. It includes a white tie and permanent markers that allow the buyer to design a unique tie. The kit costs about \$20.

Like any fashion accessory, there is a time and a place for novelty ties, said Carl Shamburger, menswear manager at Cox's Department Store. You wouldn't want to wear Mickey to a formal business meeting.

"We call it Friday dressing," said Shamburger.

Novelty ties work best with chambray or denim shirts and jeans, he said. They are fun to wear out to dinner or dancing with the wife. They are also good for the guy who doesn't wear a business suit to work, he said.



My name is Bond, James Bond

Following (from top left) Sean Connery, Roger Moore and Timothy Dalton — Pierce Brosnan will take over the movie role as British secret agent James Bond in "GoldenEye."