



THE BATTALION
Editorial Board

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EDITORIAL

PLANNING A&M'S FUTURE
 Regents must remember University's purpose

The Texas A&M University System Board of Regents meets today and tomorrow in one of its most important sessions of the year. The Board is making decisions that will greatly impact the present and future of the University and it should keep in mind Texas A&M's primary function: providing the best possible environment for education and research.

Among the items on the regents' agenda are determining the means of selecting a new System chancellor, devising an appropriate System policy on alcohol purchases, refining long-term goals, and approving operating budgets and construction projects.

In regard to each of these specific issues, the regents must make many considerations. A new or interim chancellor must prepare the System to meet constant economic and political challenges. He or she will represent the interests of the University and System to state officials who control budget appropriations and approve on major projects like the Special Events Center.

Hopefully, the candidate chosen will fill these requirements and remain in the position for a long term.

The new alcohol policy must clearly define regulations for the University's purchases of alcohol, the fiscal office's processing of vouchers and reimbursements and a proper system of accounting these transactions.

The University needs realistic long-term goals and spending plans. Forward-thinking management of University expansion and development is essential. The students can make do with old swimming pools and dead flower beds for a long time if the trade-off is additional course sections, library improvements and avoiding fee increases.

Anyone interested in these proceedings should attend the open sessions, which are being held in Room 292 of the MSC. University education and research depend on good administration of the school. If the regents provide that leadership, then their work will be done well.



Comet crash inspires celestial awe
 A&M observers wonder at exciting display of star-crossed planetary event

I squinted through the lens, letting my eyes adjust to the image of a planet under attack. An object had been hurled at the ancient sphere, named for the ruler of Roman gods. As Ganymede, that ruler's servant moon, cast a shadow on the planet face, we could clearly see a huge black spot of methane, the sign of impact, leaving a crown of atmospheric chaos. Such trauma was unusual, even for a planet that has a continual storm the size of two Earths.

At the Texas A&M Observatory, a small domed building located on a desolate hill out past Easterwood Field, astronomy was no longer a realm for scientists with doctorates in physics. It was a place where a college student could peer at objects untouched, but not unimagined.

I had not been out to the observatory for a few years, not since the astronomy lab I took as a freshman. The building was in much better shape, upkeep having been taken on by my two celestial guides, Dan Bruton and John Harper.

I have never met men who were so impassioned by their jobs. One of the greatest visible celestial events in modern history was occurring, and they, with their telescopes, scanned Jupiter's face for signs of planetary stress.

"There's no cyclone anymore," Dan said as he placed his finger on one of the impact sites, describing a comet fragment's annihilation of one of Jupiter's many atmospheric eddies. We watched Jupiter rotate at its 10-hour pace by way of a jury-rigged video camera hooked into a small television. Monday night was the first opportunity for these astronomers to see for themselves what the Hubble Space Telescope and other observatories had already recorded: Fragment G's impact site.

Comet Shoemaker-Levy 9 is more than just an excuse for scientists to spew more technobabble. It is a small taste for humanity of the true power of the Universe. The Grand Canyon isn't quite so grand when placed in parallel to the fragment's impact blasts, each of which was more fierce than any man-made explosive force.

How does human achievement weigh when compared to something so small as comet fragments impacting a gas giant, which in turn appear miniscule next to pulsars, black holes and galactic cores?

Bruton and Harper focused on Jupiter again Tuesday, as if capturing a living force within the glass lenses. I stared in absolute awe as more black spots, some larger than our own planet, circled the top of Jupiter. We talked about what

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 Columnist



would happen now: how long would the spots be visible, what had Hubble seen through thermographic and spectrographic analysis, when the next fragments would hit.

We joked about what the comet's effect should be called. After all, the pinched Jovian surface was similar to a crushed beer can. I had never seen so much excitement — people coming and going, wanting to take just a glimpse of the great mysteries of the universe. Now they can tell their kids about watching the great dark spots of Jupiter form. There was no lack of human emotion people so often associate with the scientific community.

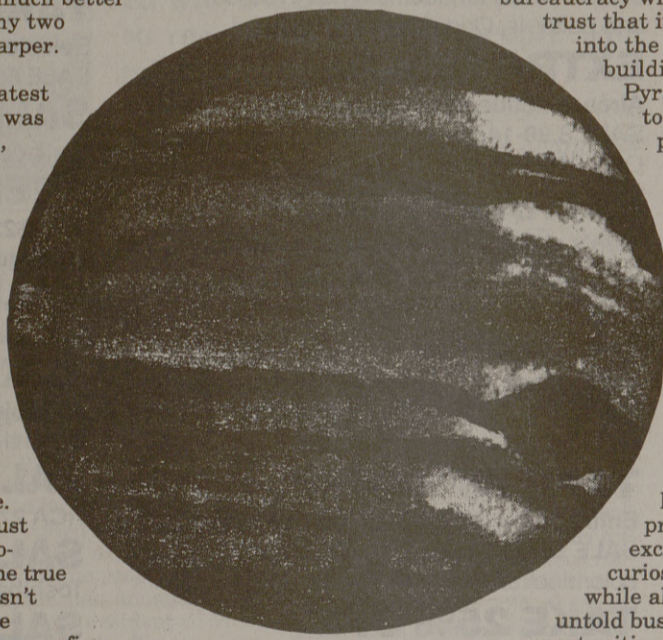
Twenty-five years ago, men stepped on Earth's moon. So little has been done since then! I have not forgotten how so many of our legislators tried to shoot down the Hubble Space Telescope project. Without this instrument, the images of Shoemaker-Levy 9 would not have their scientific quality. Cutbacks destroyed the super-conducting supercollider and many officials want to disassemble the space station before it gets off the ground. We are entertained by spaceships, warp drives and extraterrestrials, but we are not even trying to find the real thing. Instead, we are only allowed to peer out at the objects of our desire, never able to touch them.

I grew up without knowing the successes of our space program, and watched the failures of a bureaucracy which abused our trust that it would take us into the future. Like the building of the Great Pyramid or the roads to Rome, the space program is the great American moment, the point where our sense of adventure and exploration collides with our need build eternal monuments.

Humans have both the tools and the ability to build long-term space projects, which will excite our sense of curiosity and wonder while also giving us untold business opportunities and chances to expand beyond the limits of our planet. Perhaps one day, before we have our own run-in with a comet — or an unfortunate plague, war or America made during the Cold War.

Then, the next time this kind of event happens in our solar system, we might watch from ring-side seats.

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How can human achievement compare to something so cosmic as these comet fragments, which in turn appear miniscule next to pulsars, black holes and galactic cores?

Race colors picture of O.J. Simpson case
 Attempts to analyze defendant's motives force connection between personal struggles, murder

We all know the story by now. O.J. Simpson is accused of murdering his ex-wife. He cruised through L.A. in his white Bronco, a fugitive from justice holding a gun to his head. A Los Angeles county judge ruled that there was enough evidence for a trial after several days of what may have been the most highly publicized legal proceeding ever.

The drama of this affair has provoked hundreds of hours of endless analysis, argument, and speculation. Not only the tabloids, but also real news media have given top billing to the Simpson case. With all the discussion, the question of race was bound to surface.

The pundits tell us that O.J. was a black man caught in a white man's world. Sharon Collins, a University of Illinois sociologist, says that Simpson "consciously shed ... any remnants that would remind people" he is black. As a well-known sportscaster who sat right alongside Bob Costas, he supposedly had to "talk white" in order to be accepted by the mainstream sports-viewing public. He dressed "white" and played golf with the mostly white country club crowd. To complete this alleged "transformation," he even married a pretty blonde white woman.

O.J. did not want to be a black man to the public; he wanted to project a race-neutral image. He once said he wanted people to "look at me like a man first, not a black man."

He was successful in reaching this goal. However, according to Newsweek, "He collapsed under the pressure of trying to carry it off."

The link between the pressure of maintaining a "white" image and committing murder is a bit hard to fathom. How would killing your wife be a result of this struggle? This conclusion seems to be a desperate attempt to make race an issue, when it has nothing to do with the situation.

How many people thought of the situation in racial terms when they first heard the news? Chances are, very few.

O.J. Simpson is a man who was admired by people of all races for his skill on the football field and his personality inside the broadcast booth. When he was accused of murder, people of all races were stunned at the downfall of this American hero.

While race is certainly not the major focus of the case, there is a racial dimension. A USA Today-CNN Gallup poll shows that 60 percent of blacks believe that the charges against O.J. are untrue, while only 15 percent of whites

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 Columnist



feel the same way. Among blacks, 77 percent are sympathetic towards him, compared to only 42 percent of whites.

We can account for this disparity by examining our perceptions of racial minorities. Among much of the population, criminal behavior is expected, or at least not as unexpected to be committed by blacks than by whites.

Imagine if a white sports hero, say Joe Namath, was accused of a serious crime. He would probably have similar public support as O.J., but the shock would be significantly greater.

Most football fans have similar feelings towards Simpson and Namath. They are both admired for their superior athletic skill and off-the-field personalities. Both rose to mythical status as all American heroes. To see

O.J. Simpson once said that he wanted people to "look at me like a man first, not a black man." According to Newsweek, "He collapsed under the pressure of trying to carry it off."

either of them fall would be shocking and disheartening.

We would no doubt be shocked to see either man accused of murder. But the shock wears off more quickly when the man is black. We are so used to seeing black criminal suspects on television and most wanted signs that we have become desensitized. Broadway Joe accused of murder? No way. The Juice accused of murder? No way, but ...

The fact that Nicole Simpson was white, while probably irrelevant to O.J.'s attempt to "become white," does add an interesting dimension.

Would the shock be any less if it was a black woman who was killed? Probably not much, but the allure of interracial sex would be missing, and there would be one less thing for the tabloids to talk about.

Race should not matter, but it does. As much as we try to rid our society of unfair racial divisions, they persist.

We try to ignore the racial dimension of the O.J. Simpson murder trial. But somehow, we just can't.

Jim Pawlikowski is a junior chemical engineering major

MAIL CALL

Abortion carries risk to mental, physical health

I am writing in response to the editorial in the July 11 edition of The Battalion about the inaccessibility of abortion facilities in the Bryan-College Station area. Judging from their names, I assume the editorial board members are abortionists. Therefore, I should not be too surprised to see them speak out for bringing an abortionist to Bryan-College Station. The legalization of abortion is the greatest gift this country ever gave to female citizens. It permits men to completely avoid any responsibility if they

get a girl pregnant. Or, if he wants to be a real gentleman, he can just offer to pay for her abortion. What more could she want from him?

The editorial board obviously is unaware, or perhaps simply doesn't care, about all the negative physical, mental and emotional consequences of abortion. There is a significant risk of damage to a woman's reproductive capabilities, a risk to her life and a risk to her mental and emotional health. The majority of women who have abortions suffer depression, grieving, anxiety and guilt after an abortion, even if they freely made the choice themselves. Many women begin drinking heavily and using prescription medications or drugs to numb themselves to the pain. To add to her pain, or possibly because of it, she will probably lose her boyfriend. Over 70 percent of all relationships break up after an abortion.

I find it so interesting to hear the arguments that people use. For instance, the editorial said it is not up to a community to set standards by deciding that we should not have an abortion clinic here.

Who do you think decides what penalty a criminal should pay when they are convicted of a crime? A jury, typically made up of people from the local community. The community sets all of the standards for what they want and don't want from the local parks to the laws they enforce. Abortion cannot stand outside of the community's jurisdiction.

I would invite anyone to try to verify or refute any of the statements I have made. I would encourage people to shake off narrow-minded beliefs and consider another side of this issue.

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