

# E-mail saves tense friendship

## Daily 'talks' provide chance for renewed communication

**"Chris" and "Ellen" had known each other for years. They first met in the elementary school orchestra and took music lessons at the same studio. They attended junior high and high school together. They had many mutual friends and attended the same social functions. Their parents knew each other. They even wrote to each other at college and made a valiant effort to keep in touch.**

**And yet they didn't get along. Things were often awkward. Things were often tense. There were many misunderstandings. Ellen often misinterpreted Chris's blunt style of discourse as insulting. Chris often mistook Ellen's light-hearted banter as foolish drivel.**

**Friends and family were at a loss. What to do with two people who insisted on staying in touch yet did not seem compatible? Some friends tried to mediate, others stayed far away.**

**The summer after Ellen's fourth year in college, after Chris graduated, she decided to go to summer school. She and Chris realized that they would not be able to see each other over the summer since their schedules did not allow them to be in the same place at the same time.**

**It seemed that the mileage of their friendship had run out. No one, not even Ellen or Chris expected much from the relationship.**

**But something happened. Ellen opened up an e-mail account. She sent the address to Chris. He responded. Then she responded. Then he wrote a lengthy letter, and she replied. She wrote another lengthy letter, and he replied. They resumed their correspondence via electronic mail.**

**Five weeks later they were amazed. They were better friends than ever. Many misunderstandings had been resolved and common ground had been reached.**

**After writing nearly every day for over a month, they were**

getting along. They discovered that they shared a love of books, poetry and magazines. The tension dissipated, and the awkwardness disappeared.

They bumped into each other in August, sort of unexpectedly. They hadn't planned on being in the same place at the same time until December. When they met, Chris said, "You know what, I think we are going to have a long and fruitful correspondence, Ellen."

And why? Because of e-mail. It saved this friendship. This is no fictitious story. It really happened - to me of all people.

I had planned on opening an e-mail account since my sophomore year but had never gotten around to it. Friends had encouraged, begged and pleaded with me to do it. They promised that we would keep in touch, if only I would get e-mail.

I doubted that anything could be that great. Sure it sounded convenient, but was getting on the information superhighway really the joyride that everyone promised?

Well, I've been cruising for eight weeks now, and I'm loving it. My family in far away Minnesota no longer feels so alienated from me. My sister in Utah can now "talk" with me on a daily basis. My friends across the country aren't as distant. And I have never been so good about writing letters.

With regular mail, I felt that a letter had to be long to justify sending it, but with e-mail I don't think that any more. Sometimes all I write is "Dear Dad. Have a nice day. Love, Erin." It is still the thought that counts.

I encourage everyone to put their fee dollars to work. You are already paying an \$80 computer access fee, so opening an account costs you nothing. And it isn't a painful or difficult ordeal.

Just go to the Remote Computing Center (RCC) under the Cushing library. Go to the help desk in the back. Tell 'em Erin sent you. And don't be frightened. I have discovered that they really live up to their name there; they are extremely helpful.

They will give you a simple worksheet that takes you through the account-opening process step-by-step. It will tell you all you need to know. When you are through you can begin to send or receive mail. You can access your account at labs all across campus.

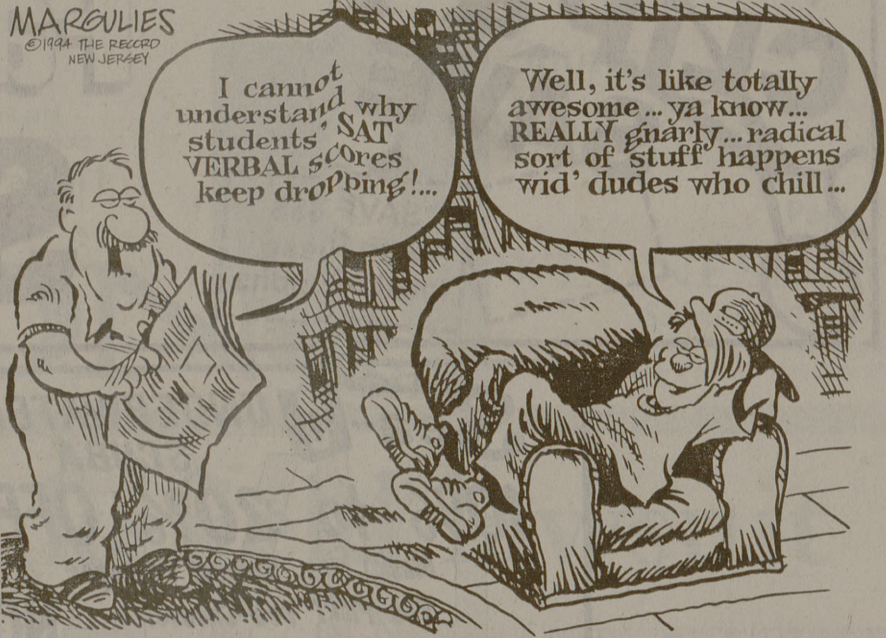
There are lots of pamphlets available too, explaining different features and options. And if you have any questions, you will know where the help desk is.

Don't wait. Run to the nearest computer lab and get an e-mail account.

It saved one of my friendships, it could do the same for you.

*Erin Hill is a senior English major*

**ERIN HILL**  
Columnist



### THE BATTALION Editorial Board

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## EDITORIAL

# DEFAULTS ON TRUST

### Student loan repayments necessary to future

Students who rely on loans and fail to repay them are not only cheating themselves, the Universities and tax-payers. They also are cheating future students as well.

When students fail to repay loans, they are hurting personal credit reports which will follow them into the future. Wages and credit ratings can be greatly affected.

Furthermore, when defaults exist in high amounts, university financial aid funding must be cut, which in turn hurts the current student body. Current students lose opportunities for aid because of the irresponsible actions of their predecessors. Additionally, taxpayers must reach into their pockets to make up for the lost funds.

More importantly, however, is the fact that student loan defaults can prevent future students from receiving loans and other financial aid. Schools with a significantly high rate of defaults are not eligible to participate in the Federal Family Education Program - one of the most widely used loan programs

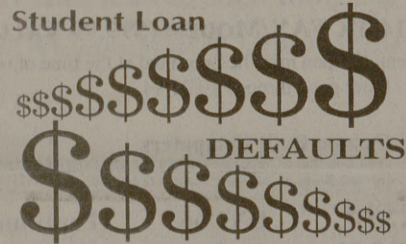
throughout the United States.

A student may have deservedly earned the right to an education and have every intention of repaying his loan, but when post-college expenses mount, the graduated student defaults on the loan. Students must realize that by failing to comply with the rules and regulation, others become the victims. Either the number of loans given or the amount of each loan is reduced.

Fortunately, on this campus, the problem is slight. A&M's default rate is considerably low and has been for quite some time - yet another tradition which to be proud.

Because previous students have been responsible enough to repay their loans, current and future students' ability to find aid is not jeopardized.

Receiving an education is a privilege in itself, but receiving a loan is much more than a privilege - it is a responsibility that should be taken seriously. Not returning borrowed money is a crime that robs the leaders of tomorrow.



# U.S. must prepare to overcome terrors of terrorism in future

Traditional wisdom has always stated that safety lies in numbers.

Places like coffee shops, malls, and sporting events are supposed to be relatively safe. Criminals cannot exactly sneak up and attack a person with everyone watching, unless they commit the crime for attention.

Terrorists are that kind of criminal. They do not seem to mind killing as many innocent people as necessary to gain publicity, power and money. Terrorists operate all over the world, from Puerto Rico and Mexico to Japan and the infamous Middle East.

Two distinct groups have come into the limelight lately - the radical Palestinian group Hamas and the Irish Republican Army. Both of these groups, within weeks of each other, have almost ceased their destructive endeavors. Hamas has been virtually gutted, due to the Israeli-PLO peace processes, and the IRA is talking with British officials as this column goes to print. The question now is, what is the future face of terrorism?

Guerrilla wars and terrorist activity have gone hand in hand since the end of World War II, when it became obvious that not every militant political movement could win against governmentally trained and supplied armies. Instead, political groups discovered they could fulfill their objectives

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by staging attacks on underprotected or nonmilitary targets that would influence public opinion and bring more people, supplies and power to their organization. The number of civilians killed in bombings, assassinations

and brutal attacks mounted, and world opinion went against these groups - except when they could be used as pawns in power games between countries of diverging interests.

Now, with the end of the Cold War, the political climate has changed. Will the downturn of these groups' activities be a sign of things to come, or is it a signal for the starting of a new age?

Is Carlos the Jackal the future of terrorism, or a relic of a political game of cat and mouse that has suddenly become much colder and more dangerous? Will the U.S. become the new battleground for extremists, with the bombing of the World Trade Center an example of the beginning of a bloody age of insecurity on this soil?

The projected increases in world population mean that there will be fewer resources for human consumption per person. When food, clothes

and medicines are denied to people, while others have plenty, the rage sparked by these circumstances may very well lead to violence. America, as well as most of the Western world, is not adequately prepared to deal with future terrorist activity on its own soil.

With the United States throwing its weight around, we have made ourselves a prime target for terrorist attacks. Hypothetically, let's say that a government or a anti-government group

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abroad is failing. How can it gain its political goals? If it threatens a world power and demands a ransom, or blackmails the country, suddenly the group becomes a major player again.

How could this happen? In the worst-case scenario, a terrorist could either build or steal a nuclear weapon, according to a recent Time magazine report. Less popular but still damaging, economic terrorism could be used to push foreign powers into assisting such a group. For instance,

someone could attack the New York Stock Exchange. Or what if a group got its hands on an anti-ship missile system? It could then threaten oil tankers headed for Japan, the America or Britain through the Mediterranean or other sea lanes. With the onset of the computer age, the possibility of someone finding a way to attack computer systems or electronics is a viable option.

Am I trying to scare you to death? No. It is, however, important to realize that with a new age comes new problems. With the United States finally coming to a peaceful coexistence with the former Soviet Union, Britain possibly relaxing its activities in Northern Ireland and the threat of having children shot to death in school by PLO terrorists lessened, there are still many disenfranchised and motivated people on this planet who will gain power through any means available.

It is absolutely vital that our country, especially our military, reassess its objectives for defense and projecting American power around the world. By pushing our nose into everyone else's business, we are leaving ourselves vulnerable. Sooner or later, someone is going to bite it off.

*Josef A. Elchanan is a senior business management major*



## Health care reforms suffer bodily illness

Thank you for printing Jay Robbins' Sept. 2 column on the current health care debate. I haven't laughed so hard in quite some time. I noticed that Robbins quite proudly states that he "voted for

Bill Clinton because he promised ..." and he blames the problems that the "reform" legislation is having on "public ignorance." These two statements tell us everything we need to know about Robbins' thoughts about those who want to keep the government off of our bodies: we're just stupid.

Next, Robbins laments the fact that interest groups are performing "The Group Grab." This started the moment Mrs. Clinton took the first shot at insurance companies, signaling that health care "reform" would be a political process, and that interest groups should line up for their piece of pork.

And he wonders why we're "all so afraid of the potential dangers in a health care plan." Should we pass any plan at all, just so we can say we did

something? Why? "We need it." Well, then, it's settled.

As might be expected, Robbins (like any good liberal) begins to use The Big Lie technique. "Advancements in medicine ..." carry a very high price. Wrong. We now live longer, for cheaper, than ever before.

"Almost no one ... can afford ... a serious accident." Wrong again. The vast majority of people in this country have provided for themselves and their families. By law, hospitals are not allowed to refuse such service to those who cannot pay. The costs are passed on to those of us who can, making it more expensive and causing some people to decide not to buy insurance. What a cycle.

Robbins brings up the problem of the teenage mother, her "boyfriend"

and their premature baby. If we really want to end this problem, we should let the teenage mothers rough it, and be an example to their younger sisters and friends of what not to do.

How about "expensive vaccinations," Robbins' next example? I got vaccinated at a public health clinic in Houston for \$3.

Robbins buries his biggest whopper right in the middle of his article. "Government exists to do for the people what they can't do for themselves." I thought that we were endowed by our Creator with inalienable rights, and that to secure these rights, governments are instituted. Not to grab all my hard-earned money, push me around, and give me some goodies for "free."

Robbins says that "until the American

public clearly states that it wants health care reformed, the government will continue its ineffective meddling." It's just that I think such meddling will continue long past any health care "reform." After all, "it doesn't matter which health-care plan is chosen."

*Rusty Burlingame  
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