

Did we forget our Aggie Code of Honor?

BROOKE LESLIE Guest Columnist

In light of the recent years' events concerning the allegations of misconduct and dishonesty of Texas A&M University Administration, regents, and students, I thought it would be appropriate to address the Honor System of our University.

Remember the line, "Aggies do not lie, cheat, or steal, nor tolerate those who do?" As the years have gone by and our society has become more modern, students have failed to live by this code to its most stringent definition.

As my campaign platform stated in April, "We need to preserve the Aggie Code of Honor and maintain the high moral standard of Texas A&M by establishing a university-wide policy what will hold students accountable for their actions."

I truly believe that we need to refocus our energies on the integrity of this institution. Not only the integrity of those who manage it, but those who compromise it - the students.

How much cheating goes on in our classrooms? There is no accurate way to measure these acts of dishonesty, but as students, we see it everyday in a variety of fashions.

What do we do when a student is caught being academically dishonest? After a hearing process and even a chance to appeal, the harshest punishment most often given is a zero on the test or assignment in question.

Something definitely needs to be done to increase the level of integrity in and out of our classrooms.

Many members of our administration and faculty argue that Texas A&M is just too big to control the actions and values of students. Size is not an issue with the University of Maryland, a campus 40,000 strong, where they are in their third year of a 10-year plan to enhance and revitalize their academic system.

Currently at the University of Virginia with enrollment of 17,000, a student caught cheating faces automatic expulsion if found guilty by a student-faculty judicial board.

Are we, an institution that claims academic excellence and pride in our school, ready for this kind of Honor Code? Although many argue that our system could not handle such strict policies, I believe that with the increased prestige of our academic programs, we are ready to pursue a higher standard of honor at our university.

Jeff Wilson, executive vice president of administration for the Student Government Association and chair of the Honor and Integrity Task Force that I recently formed, recently attended the National Center for Academic Integrity Conference at Rice University.

Wilson stated, "My initial impression as I arrived at the conference was that A&M was years ahead of other universities of our size. The actual truth is that we have a lot of work to do in and beyond areas of academic integrity."

The newly established Honor and Integrity Task Force will begin working this year on studying viable options for changes in our current policies. But, no matter what actions are taken to improve our standards, student cooperation will be a necessity.

Wilson said, "The toleration clause of the code is where we see a significant challenge. Many people have seen friends cheat on an exam and not reported it. Ethical and moral questions arise as to report actions or not, and in most cases, students choose to do the latter."

Although academic dishonesty is a prime element of our Honor Code, other forms of dishonesty are encompassed in our system. Whether it be lying or stealing by students or employees, we should work to see that such acts do not take place.

We need to work together in order to maintain and improve the spirit, honor, and integrity of Texas A&M University.

Brooke Leslie is a senior agricultural development major

Food quest goes Underground

New construction builds countless inconveniences

Every night last semester my friend and I walked to The Underground to buy Concorde Punch. We never bought one for the next night - that just wouldn't have been the same.

MICHAEL LANDAUER

Columnist



But The Underground is gone this year, and I am not alone in my hopeless feelings of deprivation. Many of my Northside neighbors share in my sadness. We miss The Underground. While we wait for the new food court to be completed, we scrounge through our roommates' laundry money to find correct change for the coke machines and think back to the glory days when we discovered the miracle of AggieBucks.

As freshmen, the market under Sbisa and Bernie's was a pleasant surprise. You could spend AggieBucks (Mom and Dad's money in my case) on candy and magazines. Mom and Dad were funding last-minute birthday cards and didn't even know it. Which reminds me, I need to get my sister-in-law a late birthday card but I would have to venture to the MSC to do that. I just don't have time. I hope Food Services is happy - my sister-in-law will hate me now.

The Underground got the majority of my AggieBucks last year. Since my parents will read this, I feel compelled to mention AggieBucks' best attribute. They teach responsibility. At first it seems like everything is free, but as the AggieBucks run out we learn an important lesson in money management. The more money we squander, the bigger the lesson. So, parents, put more money into our accounts. We want to learn.

The absence of a market on northside is not a huge problem, but it is inconvenient. The sign in front of The Underground directs students to the Common Market. Oh sure. Business is up this year at the Common Market, but students don't usually make the long trek to southside for a couple of Cokes and a loaf of bread.

We also need that food court because it is an alternative to Sbisa. Some people love Sbisa and others hate it. But we all

try to avoid it sometimes. Cafeteria food just doesn't do it for many people. The gravy scares me.

Even those who love Sbisa are not in the mood for it every day. The Underground offered a place to go to buy frozen, microwaveable Mexican food and pizza. Again, Mom and Dad's money goes to a cause of which they are completely oblivious.

So when will the infamous new food court construction be finished? They had aimed for late August when they started the project. Then they told us it would be done in September when we came back to school this year. That was a pretty lofty goal considering the 90-day work phase had not yet begun. But they had AggieBucks to sell. Now they hope the whole thing will be done by February.

These delays are frustrating, but necessary. They found asbestos and more structural problems than they anticipated. The building is 82-years-old - these discoveries should not have been shocking. They're also adding a water sprinkling system, and the building must meet new government codes to be more accessible to the handicapped.

There are 30,000 students who use AggieBucks on campus compared to only 9,000 students who have meal plans. We are sick of spending that money on meals and responsible stuff. We're sick of wasting real money or walking to the MSC or to the Common Market to stock up on groceries. We're sick of having to cook macaroni and cheese on our illegal hot plates in our rooms.

We talked our parents into giving us AggieBucks for a reason and Bernie's was not that reason.

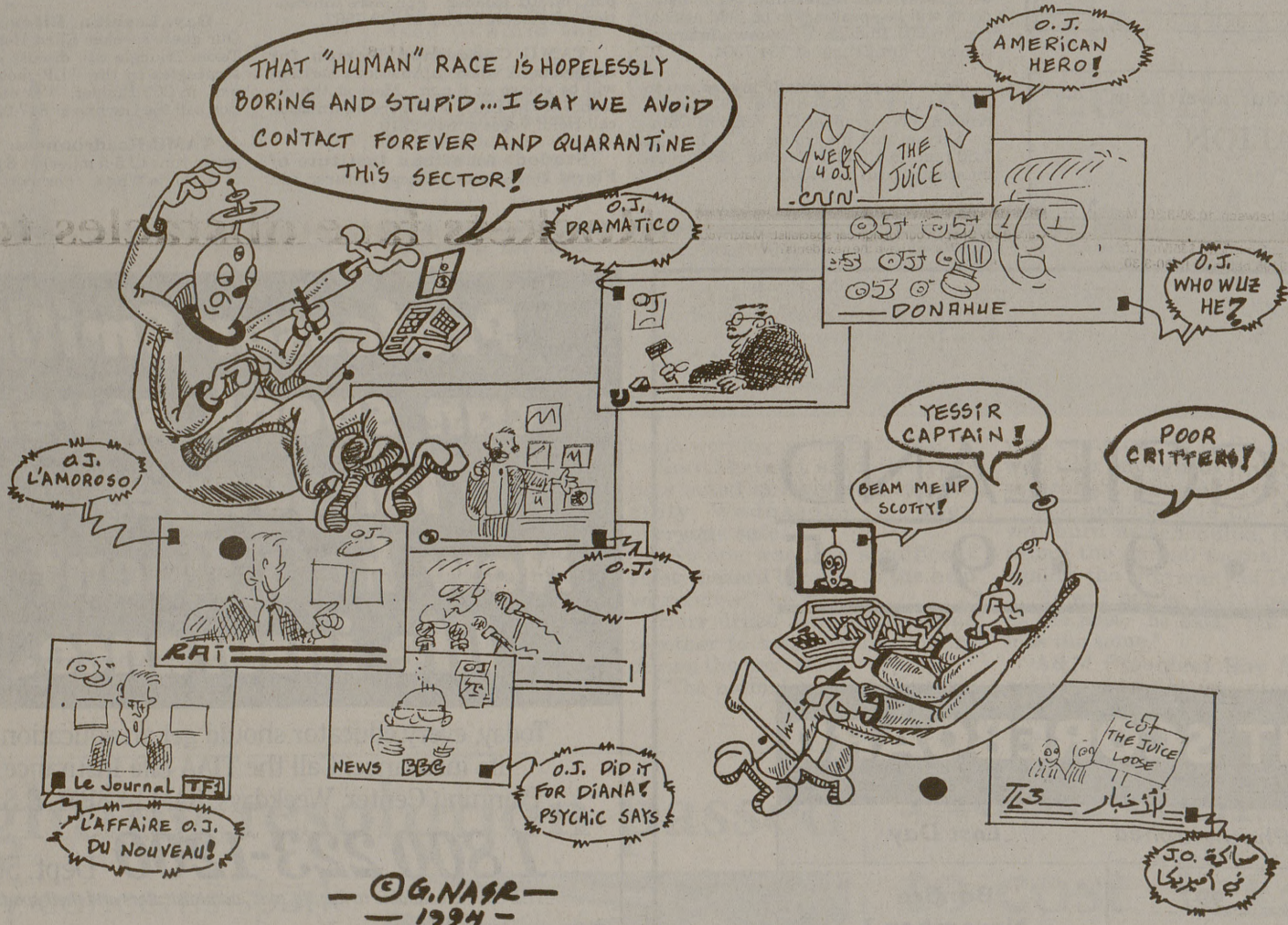
But - after we have suffered through this semester of inconvenience - it will all be worth it. The University will give us Chick-Fil-A, Whataburger, Taco Bueno and some deli no one has heard of before. We'll have our market back with frozen yogurt and huge supplies of Concorde Punch.

Our plight reminds me of other hardships endured throughout history. I remember Franklin D. Roosevelt's soothing words when he spoke to the starving masses during the Great Depression: "We have nothing to fear, but Sbisa itself."

Hang in there, Northside.

Michael Landauer is a sophomore journalism major

The Underground is gone this year, and I am not alone in my hopeless feelings of deprivation. My Northside neighbors share my sadness.



Over the river and through the woods ...

Weekend journey inspires thoughts about towns, people on route

AJA HENDERSON

Columnist



It's that time of year again. The leaves are turning colors and falling. The air has taken on a new crispness. Football is on. In spite of the fact that the weather is sometimes confused and cannot decide whether it wants to be hot or cold, I smell autumn.

Soon, after I put the Halloween pumpkin away and finish my bag of mini Snickers bars and candy corn packets, my taste buds will start gearing up for their next major event - Thanksgiving. I cannot wait to go to my grandmother's house to give thanks for all of my blessings and eat, eat, eat.

OK, so the waiting got the best of me. Last weekend, I packed up my things and headed home for Baton Rouge. Of course, my desire to go to Granny's grew more intense, especially since we were now in the same state. So, after about a split-second's worth of hesitation, I headed out, destination: Granny's house.

To imagine this trip, all you have to do is think of that famous song that starts out like this: "Over the river and through the woods, to grandmother's house we go." To this day, I still think this song was written expressly for the journey to my Granny's house. Granny lives at the tip-top of Louisiana, deep in the heart of Tensas Parish, in the little town of St. Joseph. The entire trip encompasses traveling from Louisiana, through part of Mississippi, then a crossover back into Louisiana.

After driving northbound out of Baton Rouge, I began approaching beautiful plantation country. This is the part of my state that is shown in the movies - sprawling oaks, azalea plants and huge mansions. I always enjoy peering through the rows of impressive oak trees, trying to catch a glimpse of the great houses. This time, I slowed down considerably, taking time to read the brass placards on the side of the road that give historical information about the plantation homes.

Memories of days past flooded my head as I paused at the infamous "spooked" Myrtles home. My friends and I had freaked ourselves out many times entertaining the idea of going there unaccompanied on Halloween. Ah, memories.

After progressing through plantation country, I reached Woodville, Miss. Here, I stopped at the mom

and pop grocery that is the home of one of my favorite foods in this world - a giant, golden-fried turkey leg that is almost the size of my arm. After handing the cashier a couple of dollars, I set out once again, gnawing my turkey leg in earnest.

Many miles of gorgeous hill country later, I entered Natchez, Miss. As usual, I glanced at the large house on top of the hill at the base of the Mississippi River. I have always wondered about the people who live in that house - do they get nervous come storm time? Do they walk around everywhere leaning, given that their house seems to lean? Pondering these deep questions, I crossed the

great Mississippi.

Back in Louisiana, I was now on the last leg of my journey - the "small town stretch." I began passing through those oddly named towns that are so small it makes me wonder if real people really live there. I always get sad on this part of my journey, for this location, between Natchez into Tensas Parish, is one of the most impoverished areas in Louisiana.

It tears deep into my heart when I see the beggars, drunks and scraggly children on the side of the road in these small country towns.

Finally, I began to pass the large corn and cotton fields on the outskirts of Ferriday, which meant that I was almost in my grandmother's neck of the woods. After winding along a three mile curve, I reached my final destination.

My grandmother's home is like an incredible

beacon in otherwise rustic woods. This eight-bedroom home is the pride and joy of our family, for it is a beautiful symbol of my grandfather's talent and skill as a carpenter. It stands strong and tall, just like my beaming Granny

who was emerging from the house with open arms. Well, as I sat in the large kitchen and munched on homemade biscuits, I filled my grandmother in on the details of my trip. She listened attentively as I chattered on. Finally, I sighed softly and leaned back, closing my eyes in contemplation on my adventure over the river and through the woods.

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EDITORIAL

PUBLICITY FLOODS

Candidates use disaster in campaigns

Politicians and the media should not use natural disasters for their own public relations campaigns.

Last week we saw many images illustrating the destructive power of the floods which swept through southeast Texas. We saw scenes of rescues and heard the stories of losses. We saw families soaked in rain asking, "Why us?"

These images will not soon be forgotten - state politicians and the media are counting on it. That is why they used the floods as a way to serve their needs. George W. Bush was out in his flood gear showing how much he cares about his fellow Texans who still aren't sure if they are going to choose him over incumbent Ann Richards for governor. And Richards was out looking like a responsible leader as she surveyed the damage and asked for federal help. As voters step into the polls they might remember how Richards "got things done" during the flood, or how Bush consoled the victims.

The saddest part about politician's using such ploys to gain support is that it works. Former President George Bush was criticized when he did not react quickly to Hurricane Andrew, which slammed into the southeastern U.S. coast toward the end of his presidency. We want our leaders to react, but they don't have to tour disaster areas glumly shaking their head for the cameras.

The media is guilty of using the flood for selfish gains, too. Television ads are running with clips of field reporters standing in waist-high water. Their messages are the same as each station tells its viewers that it had more in-depth coverage of the floods than anyone else. "We're there for you." "We care about Texas."

Viewers don't need to be told how good a station's coverage was or that the media cares. Do the average viewers really say, "Wow, Channel 117 said they had the best coverage and they sure have good clips. I'm tuning into them for the next disaster."

We were all saddened to see our fellow Texans endure this latest disaster, but we should not let the media and politicians exploit the event for their own causes. Tune in for the news, tune out on the rhetoric.

Back in Louisiana, I was now on the last leg of my journey. I passed through those towns that are so small it makes me wonder if real people really live there.