


A&M Corps experience makes life long impression

JOSEPH ELCHANAN
Columnist



It must have been 10 years ago when fate intervened and changed my life forever. My family was on the way home at night when our car began to cough. My dad got worried and stopped the car outside the Texas A&M Agricultural Extension Service building located near the outskirts of Dallas. As my father fiddled under the hood, a man dressed in a dark uniform, medals draped from a shirt dissected by razor-sharp creases, emerged from the shadows, his boots snapping at the ground with each step. Unconcerned about the possibility of soiling his uniform, the man proceeded to help my father inspect the engine. He was the first Corps member I ever met.

young Texas boys can. While Aggies would serve in both the Spanish-American War and the World War, it was World War II that gave A&M its reputation and my fellow Corps members something to live up to. During the war, old AMC gained notoriety for sending 18,000 Aggies to combat the Axis, including 13,000 officers, more than any school in the country, including West Point and Annapolis. I always figured our predecessors from the Alamo and San Jacinto would have been proud to know that Texans could still fight.

While the Corps has changed a lot over the years, it is still basically the same. Its umbrella has spread over minorities and women, its workload has flowed back and forth from grueling to just above awful. But one mission has remained the same; to take common people and make them extraordinary. I have found that our former members, on average, have a strong belief in making a lifestyle filled with discipline and great expectations for themselves and helping their fellows achieve this same goal. From those who went to the Chosin Reservoir and Iraq, to those that entered the business world, each promotes Corps training as the thing that saved them, that got them to where they are.

The Corps is often misunderstood. Cadets are often perceived as bullying fanatics and delinquents. These beliefs are based solely on myth and conjec-

ture. The Corps certainly has had its share of what some might consider unorthodox activities. That really has little to do with the whole experience which is, quite frankly, usually a lot of fun for all involved. The real tortures are the failures each cadet faces when he or she fails to perform their prescribed duty, which tends to lead to losses for the entire outfit. Every cadet has a day when they break.

The Corps was never about positions or medals, to most of us it was more about camaraderie and winning as a team. My time in the Corps was not always fun. Not all your buddies are friends, not all your superiors are professionals and not all your

longer yours, but belongs to someone else, like leaving a childhood home.

One of the most important moments of my life was the night after Final Review my fish year. I stood on the empty Quadrangle, the night air blowing on my face as I looked down the row of trees on either side of the parallel walkways, their branches hanging over what I considered sacred ground. I stood there for the first time, not worried about some upperclassmen correcting me for "scoping out the quad," as we called such activity, and thought, "I won!" I would learn later that the responsibility that came with my new rank meant more trouble than I bargained for. I would also not realize what my "dead" upperclassmen meant when they said that they wished they could do it all over again, until now. For me, it is all just a kind of dream until I look at my boots. It is then that I remember and hope that I made some sort of difference, like the change an unsuspecting Aggie caused in me so long ago.

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subordinates are worthwhile. But some of the moments of the Corps experience are worth every liter of sweat and pain endured. And when it is all over, as it is for me now, you feel different, much wiser and sometimes sad, for that place is no

This is dedicated to my buddies,
C-2 Cocks, Class of 1994

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EDITORIAL

FOOT IN MOUTH

Helms' remarks not taken lightly

In an interview with The Raleigh News and Observer on November 21, North Carolina Senator Jesse Helms said President Clinton is so unpopular on military bases that "he'd better have a bodyguard" if he travels to North Carolina.

Although later that day Helms admitted that his statement was a mistake, Helms' statement was inappropriate for a public official who is about to take the chairmanship of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. Helms also attacked Clinton's ability as U.S. Commander in chief.

Helms' statement could be interpreted as a direct attack on the President's well being, as it is apparent that the President already has the protection of the Secret Service. Should a radical individual follow through on Helms' warning, he should be held partially accountable for inciting violence.

With Republicans now in control of Congress, it is important for them to focus their attention on their upcoming agenda, rather than making public statements about the President's safety.

However, Helms' remarks appear

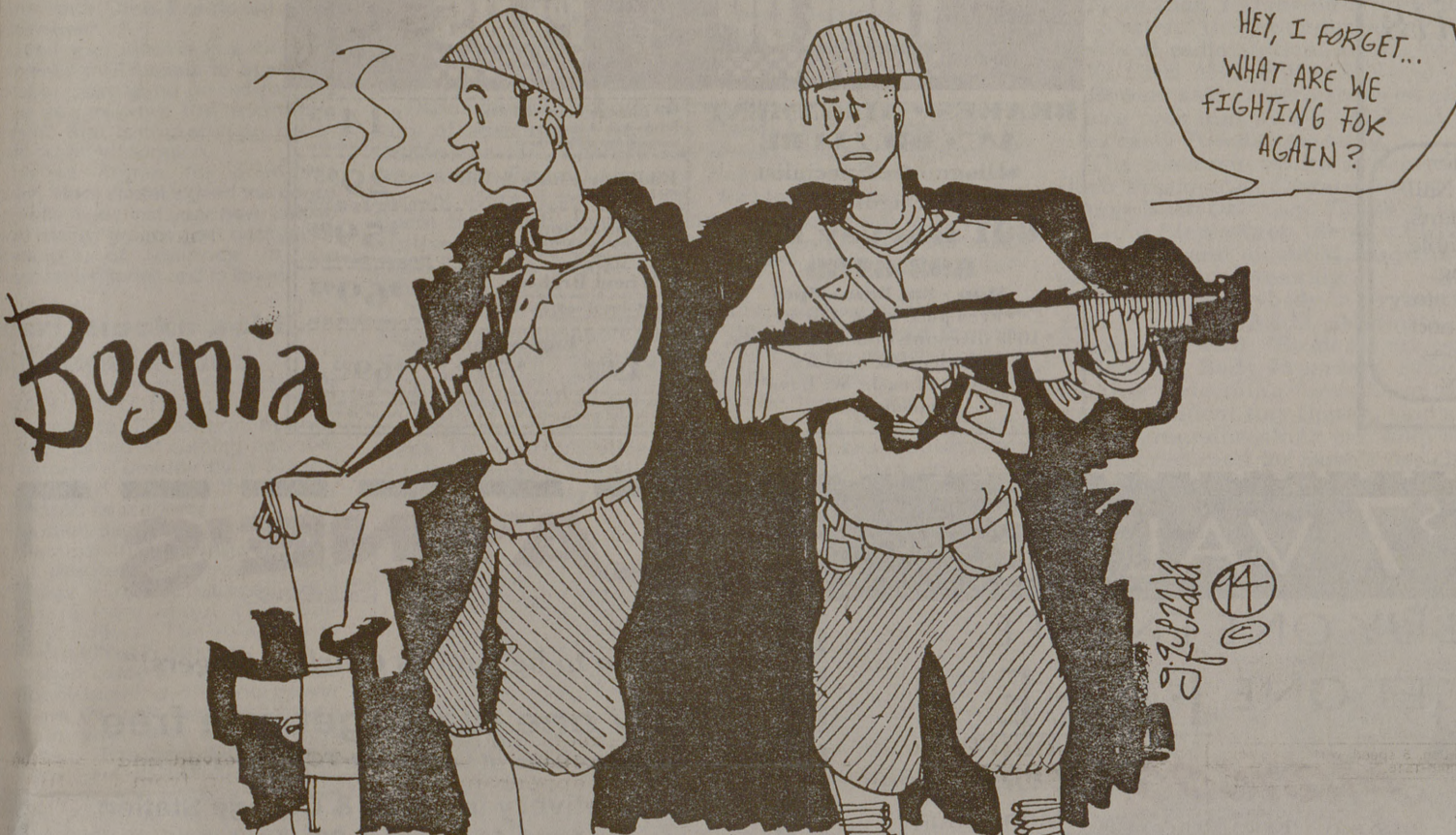
to have been more of a partisan attack, rather than a declaration of concern. President Clinton, whatever his public approval rating is, was elected to the presidency and should be shown the respect that he has earned — especially from a member of the Senate who is to assume the chairmanship of a committee.

On Nov. 8, the voters expressed a strong desire for bipartisanship. Now that the Republicans have gained control of both the House and the Senate, they must adhere to a different standard of responsibility.

Not only must the Republicans accept the responsibility of leadership, they must also learn to work with both the Democratic Congress and the Democratic President.

Statements like the one that Helms' made, even if they were made "off the cuff," have no place in the legislative bodies.

Helms' statement has gone so far as to make other Republican leaders nervous every time he appears before the media, and is damaging to his party. To further benefit the Grand Old Party, Helms should keep his mouth shut and keep his remarks behind closed doors.



'Tis the season to go visiting

Holiday cheer spreads to the places where we bring it

My Thanksgiving Day was just as Norman Rockwell might have painted it, with extra stuffing and gravy.

ERIN HILL
Columnist



Winter vacation will be no different. There will be snow where I am going, which makes it better. Snow softly falling, softly piling, softly overtaking the front door. Softly, I sneak away to avoid shoveling the beautiful stuff.

Caroling, shopping, baking, wrapping; every minute is spoken for. Frequent parties and get-togethers are good excuses to buy clothes. Curfews are relaxed and mornings are spent in bed, recovering from late nights. Honestly, I cannot wait.

For me, it's a given that my holidays will be filled with love and cheer. My immediate family celebrates together, and my extended family is included by way of AT&T. Just like me, you probably have plenty of gifts with your name on them and lots of appointments scribbled in your calendar.

It's a luxury I have, to have lots of people to be with, visit, talk to and think of.

I have never been forgotten on a holiday, even when I forget. Friends, more conscientious than I, make sure that I return to school with pretty things and at least a couple of books I've been looking forward to reading.

When I told my mother of my new found dream of becoming a folk singer, which means I need a guitar and a book that will teach me how to play it, she didn't even blink.

"We'll go shopping when you come home."

When I needed a tennis racket, in spite of my painful lack of coordination and horrible return, my wish was granted. Likewise, over the years the other material goods that have tugged at my heart made it into my possession. Even the pale yellow boots with leather tassels that my 14-year-old self fell in love with.

The guilt hovers near, especially when I think of people who don't have the same amount of presents I do. But what really gets to me is thinking of people who are missing what is most important during the holiday season, the company of loved ones, and I'm not referring to businessmen and women stranded in an airport on their way home.

I'm thinking of the elderly people in nursing homes and retirement centers who spend this time of year, and often

the rest of the year, alone.

Not all people who live in these care centers spend the holidays in solitude. No, there are lots of nursing home residents whose families still care, live nearby or make the effort to have contact; but even those who receive phone calls or visits during the holidays spend many hours alone.

The staff of these facilities also have families to tend to, and cannot spend extra hours visiting with residents when the shift is over. We can't expect them to fill the void completely.

It would be terrific if each of us could grab a friend, or two, and spend a few hours each week at a nursing home. Even a few hours each month would be helpful. Each nursing home has a different policy regarding visitors, so it would be best to call and either make an appointment or ask a supervisor about good times to visit.

It may be scary to think of spending unplanned, unscheduled time in a place full of strangers, but it's not painful at all. There are plenty of ways you can help.

For example, during one holiday visit to a home for veterans, my family performed and sang for a wheelchair-bound audience.

One of the members of the crowd seemed especially thrilled that we were there. He sang along with each song and knew all of the words. He clapped and smiled and seemed genuinely sad when we concluded our program.

We went up to talk with him, but he didn't respond to our questions. One of the aides told us that this man couldn't speak, he could only sing. They had been thrilled to see him expressing himself, because most of the year he was quiet.

Obviously, caroling comes to mind as something to do during a visit; you don't have to be musically gifted to sing. You don't even need to be musically competent.

Think of all the carolers that have come to your door through the years. Have they all been miniature Mormon Tabernacle Choirs? No, certainly not.

In addition to singing visitors, they welcome anyone willing to play cards, write letters, push wheelchairs or just listen. Sometimes that is what is most needed. Elderly people, as we well know, have lived longer than any of us — through hard times, good times and everything in between.

They have much to share with us, and us them. But we have to show up first.

Erin Hill is a senior English major



Texas Rustlers apologize for stealing MSC flags

We would like to take this opportunity

to sincerely apologize to any students, faculty or alumni from Texas A&M or UT who were offended when four of us took 13 spirit flags from the MSC. The flagnapping was intended as an expression of the friendly rivalry that exists between UT and A&M. From the beginning, we intended to return all the flags unharmed as a sign that this was a good-spirited prank, not a malicious act. But since the spirit flags are held in a position of honor and reverence by many A&M students past and present, some looked upon our prank as hateful and mean-spirited; for this we are sorry. We

feel that school spirit and good sportsmanship are an essential part of the character of every student.

We are concerned with the bad sportsmanship exhibited by some UT students at recent football games. Alumni and fans in attendance have complained about UT students harassing other spectators, throwing ice and cups, and using vulgar language. This is not acceptable public behavior and is certainly not to be expected from college students. It reflects poorly on our university. Such offensive behavior is not conducive to a healthy rivalry nor a spirit of friendly

competition. We believe that the purpose of team rivalries and school spirit is to uplift and encourage, not to promote bad feelings and hostility. We are concerned that our prank has been misconstrued as endorsing such behavior. This was not our intent. Friendly pranks do not hurt people or property. They should confound and amaze, but never harm.

Be proud of the rivalry between our schools. Let it bring out the best in us, not the worst.

Let it show that we are good sports and able competitors, not mean-spirited, malicious or bitter. Go ahead and get

carried away in the fun and excitement of the tradition, and let it demonstrate the true character of our rivalry — that of mutual respect and healthy competition.

The Texas Rustlers

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