

kets snap
e-game
ng streak

Tears often only fall for famous

'Dweeb' teacher's death from AIDS fails to receive empathy

EEK! Tabby's scream came through the phone all too clearly. I was used to my hometown friend's dramatics - we had been close friends for many years. So, when I heard her vocal cords straining over the phone while I was home in Baton Rouge last week, I didn't expect the unexpected.

AJA HENDERSON
Columnist



It turned out that one of our high school teachers, Mr. Hendrix, had died the previous night. No one would reveal the cause of death, but it was known that he had taken a mystery trip to Mexico a few weeks back. The widely held theory for his little excursion was that Mr. Hendrix had AIDS.

"Girl, he had to have AIDS! Remember how he used to act? You know that's probably why his butt was in Mexico..." I began to tune her voice out as my thoughts drifted to Mr. Hendrix. He had been a history professor at my high school and he was a little, well... dweeby. He came to school wearing highwater pants and his kinky hair parted smack down the middle. Oh - and who can forget his high-pitched, nasal whine.

Good ol' Mr. Hendrix! Although he never taught any of my classes, he had been an advisor for one of my clubs. At the meetings, as he flitted his hands nervously and squeaked on and on, I felt a little pity towards him. He had to know that his students were giving him no respect! He had to know that they were constructing hypotheticals regarding his life. He had to know that he had been pegged as "gay."

I guess that whether he knew that or not does not matter know, for he is dead. Nonetheless, the rumors, the chattering tongues... these things have not yet ceased for Mr. Hendrix. All I heard when I bumped into people from high school was, "Did you hear about Mr. Hendrix? You know he had AIDS. I bet he went down to Mexico to get horse shots or something!" I watched in fascination as their faces lit up to spread the gossip while the mouths of their audiences formed round little Os.

I am confused. I would say that these people have little or no compassion for people who die of AIDS. But - wait... weren't these the same folks who, not weeks ago, sadly announced the death of Pedro Zamora, another AIDS victim? He was one of the guys on MTV's "The Real World."

Upon learning that he had the virus, Pedro became an activist. He went around educating people about AIDS, telling them that he contracted the disease from unprotected sex, and that they should exercise caution in that area. Pedro was homosexual, and millions of couch potatoes got to witness everything from his first date to his subsequent marriage to his boyfriend, Sean.

During this season, while people were watching the show and their discomfort with Pedro's gayness began to dissipate, they started to like him. They saw that he was a guy with a big cause, and a big heart to match. So, it should come as no surprise that when he died several weeks back, he was honored in most of the major newsmagazines and broadcasts. Pedro was pegged a hero.

So! There you have it. Mr. Hendrix, dweeb teacher, dies "of AIDS" and people snicker behind their hands. Pedro Zamora, new television celebrity, dies and everyone sighs in sadness.

What was so different about their deaths such that one was classified as "important," while the other was "inconsequential?" I would like to believe that it is from the difference in their characters, but I have a feeling that this has a lot more to do with homosexuality, AIDS and celebrity status. You might say that's simply life. But that does not make it right. It should not take the death of a celebrity to wet our eyes.

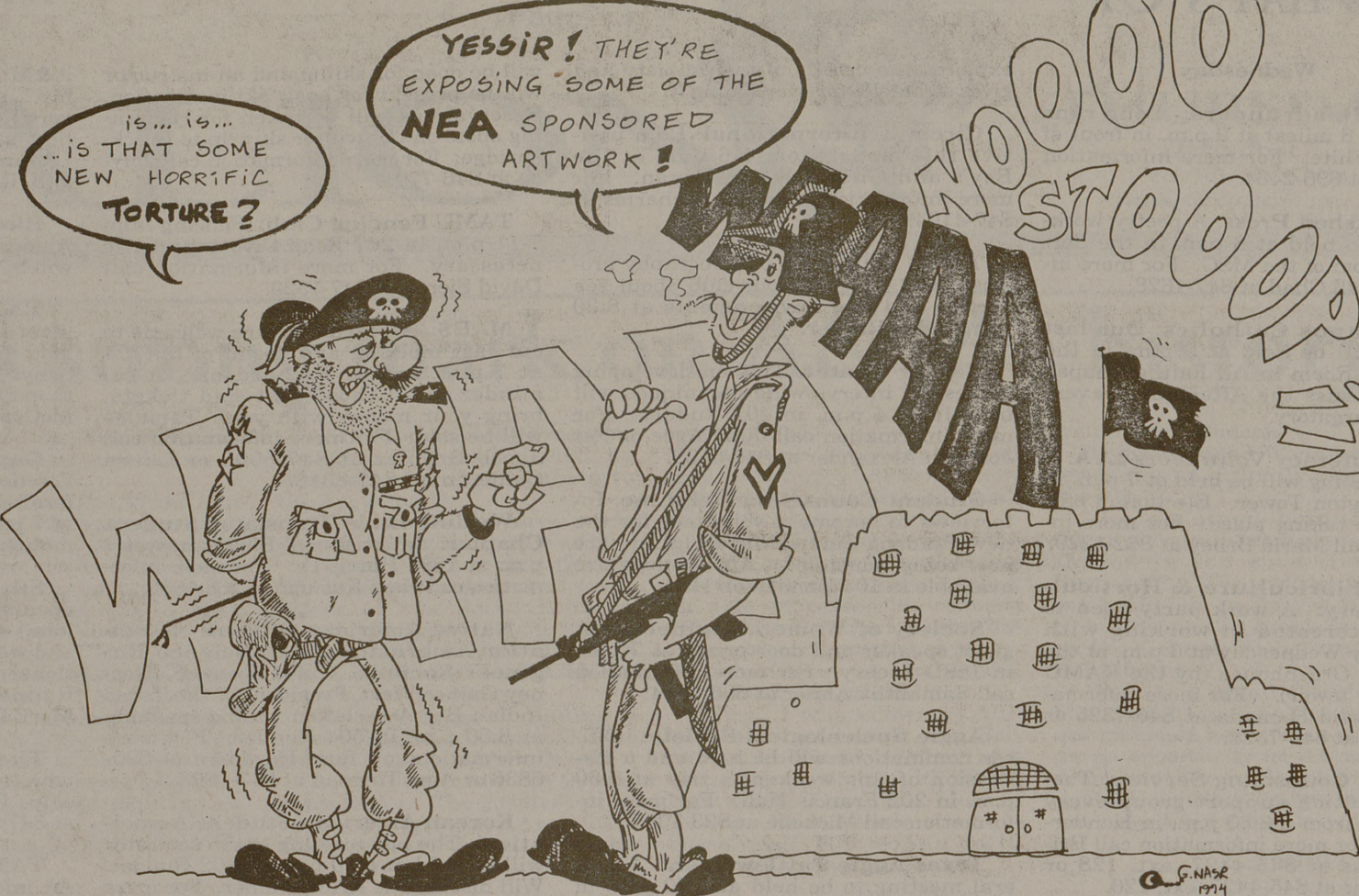
I am a heterosexual female, but I realize that not everyone is like me. I also realize that anyone can get AIDS, celebrity or not, and that it does not discriminate.

Why, then, should we? If you feel compassion for Pedro, isn't it only right to feel some compassion for the Texans who have HIV? And what about the thousands with AIDS?

If you felt a twinge in your heart when you heard about Pedro's death, you are a hypocrite if you turn up your nose to the other folks who die of AIDS.

The bottom line is simple - AIDS does not discriminate, and neither should we.

Aja Henderson is a sophomore finance major



THE BATTALION
Editorial Board
Belinda Blancarte, Editor in chief
Mark Evans, Managing editor
Jenny Magee, Opinion editor
Sterling Hayman, Asst. opinion editor

EDITORIAL

UNBALANCED PLAN

Budget amendment creates state problems

A constitutional amendment to require a balanced federal budget will be voted on in the House of Representatives in mid-January. Rep. Gerald B.H. Solomon, a senior Republican from New York, proposed a plan in March which will require spending cuts across the board. Though a balanced budget amendment is possible in theory, its effects may be irreversible - especially for Texans.

science and medicine. Instead of cutting the space station altogether, it should be scaled down to meet both our needs and fit a new budget. However, the cuts do not stop there, but continue into spending on social programs.

The amendment's supporters claim they can perform such a task without raising federal income taxes. However, by keeping such a claim they will have to make cuts in programs which are essential to this country's prosperity and responsibilities. These cuts will entail a total of \$700 billion in five years and over \$1 trillion in seven years.

States may also find that they are responsible for funding programs which were once federally funded. Although Texas' Gov.-elect George W. Bush promises not to create a state income tax, politicians may find that they are without a choice should Texas become responsible for paying for many more services and duties to citizens.

With the amendment, economic aid to Russia, the construction of a space station and almost all agriculture price supports will be cut altogether.

Although this amendment may reduce the size of the federal deficit, Texas cannot afford to pay for more programs, especially with the state's school systems in such disarray.

Cutting aid to Russia would jeopardize newly established relations. We should maintain excellent ties to a country that is so rich in natural resources. Similarly, the proposed space station is beneficial to advance breakthroughs in the areas of

Legislators should consider the possible negative effects of such an amendment. Cuts in federal spending may look promising on paper until we see and feel the results. Politicians should be more selective on the programs which they are planning to cut and continue to debate until all the aspects of such an amendment are understood.



Growing up doesn't mean growing apart

From playgrounds to the real world friendships continue to influence us

Maybe it is because the seasons are finally changing. Maybe it's because I just saw a lot of old friends over Thanksgiving. Maybe it's just random. But I've been thinking about old friends lately. My oldest friend, John, called me recently and we figured out that it has been 15 years since we became friends.

MICHAEL LANDAUER
Columnist



We met on a playground at the local pool. My mom used to babysit him after kindergarten. John taught me where his grandpa hid his Playboys, and I taught John to like candy corn. We were never in the same class and were only in the same school for only years and have not lived near each other in eight years. But two friends could never have been closer while they were growing up.

We all have someone like this in our lives. As we grew up, they knew us as well as we knew ourselves. We could always say anything to them because it was almost as though we were talking to ourselves. The strangest thing about old friends is that distance does not matter.

A song by Lyle Lovett reminds me of John, and probably reminds a lot of other people about their friends. The song is called "Old Friends" (go figure) and talks about the old times and all the stories Lovett shared with a friend. But he keeps saying, "It might be easy for another man to see."

When I heard this line, it didn't seem to fit. For another man to see what? It's our friendship. We are the ones who see each other like no one else does. What could someone on the outside looking in possibly see that we don't. Lyle's answer: "I think you still look a lot like me."

Well, John is about eight inches taller than me, naturally tan and has cool hair. In short, we look nothing alike. I know that is not what Lyle meant, though. But John and I are different in other ways, too. I've grown up to be someone who likes politics and arguing. He is someone who gets pissed about an occasional issue, but only argues for a few minutes before saying, "Ah, it doesn't really matter." He has always loved music or acting or film-making. I couldn't care less. But all friends have different interests. Life would be too boring if they didn't. But sometimes friends have different temperaments, too.

I have been what I like to call "focused." But John and other friends have said that I am like Alex P. Keaton from "Family Ties." One Halloween I walked into class and notice my friend, Sean, wearing some of my clothes. "Hey that's my coat. And my Nixon shirt. And my election buttons. Hey! You're dressed as me!" Other people think I'm not serious enough. I can be a bum. One of my most celebrated attributes is my ability to talk people out of studying for more leisurely pursuits. Hell, I'm a journalist. We're alcoholic vampires. If my earliest class wasn't at 11:10 a. m., I'd never see noon. This side of me is the work of my friends.

We have all changed since our childhood friendships. We've grown up. Sometimes where we ziggled, they zagged. We share a lot of common experiences, but we have lived a lot more without them.

In spite of all the time we have had to grow in different directions, we are still a lot like our friends.

We all have a little of our old friends in us. A frat-boy in Arkadelphia, Ark., a t-sip and an Aggie engineer could all make up important parts of who we are. Maybe it does take "another man to see" after all. My old friends probably do not realize how laid back they have made me, but someone who sees us together might understand where I learned to become less uptight.

Old friendships are not just sources of memories. Our friends are mirrors of who we have become. We look at our good friends and we see pieces of ourselves. So write them. Call them. Keep in touch with them. And appreciate them for how much they have changed you.

Not every friend that comes along affects us in a profound way. Most friends don't stick around for too long. But when they do, you have something special. It doesn't have to take someone else to see - if you think about it, you'll probably realize how much you look like your friends.

I know I look like John. And Sean. And. And...

Michael Landauer is a sophomore journalism major

MAIL CALL

Politicians should tackle real issues, not prayer

Upon reading the Battalion editorial on Nov. 22 on school prayer, I felt compelled to comment. I agree with the editors' view that a constitutional amendment designating a specific time for school prayer is not right for America. I also agree with the solution that students could be allowed to exercise their religious beliefs by simply letting students pray before class on school grounds or at home.

I think, however, that two important points were missed. First of all, students already can pray at home, on school grounds or even in class - if they choose not to pay attention to the teacher. This is really a moot point.

Second, the editors seem to have missed the point behind the Republican plan. The Republican politicians' purpose (besides trying to get elected and re-elected) is not to protect students who want to "exercise their religious beliefs." It is to push "some kind" of religion on other children because of their mistaken belief that it will change their behavior. They actually believe that students, by stopping for a moment to pray, will somehow be less likely to lie, cheat, steal, hurt, maim, kill, use drugs and make babies.

I know, from my own parochial school days, that a moment of prayer in school isn't worth a hill of beans when kids aren't raised right at home. Heck, having required-religion courses in my high school didn't help anyone become a better citizen. The trouble makers during my freshman year were the same, if not worse, by my senior year!

Politicians should stick to the real issues this country faces. School prayer is certainly not one of them.

Keith Volanto
Graduate Student

Kudos to Aggie who helped prevent serious accident

Before you read on, I want you to know this isn't your typical "Mail Call" letter. You'll find no real controversy, extreme opinions, racist remarks or sexist posturing in the next 170 or so

words. You see, I'm just happy to be alive. My dog "H" and I were literally inches from becoming the meat in a Mazda sandwich Sunday night on Highway 6 just north of BCS.

If it wasn't for the quick reflexes of a fellow Ag in a late 80's model Celica, I would have plowed into some bonehead who tried to park a car in my lane. This good Ag gunned it. I swerved. It was a matter of inches. Of course, my cheeks still haven't unlocked; nonetheless, all my appendages are still intact. Many thanks to the stunt driver. There's a pitcher at The Chicken with your name on it. Get in touch, and I'll buy.

In closing, I just want to say I'd like to read more good bull in the Battalion Mail Call, and not so much petty crap. (Oops, the power of the press made me throw in that opinion). Gig 'em, and ace the hell outta finals.

Ryan Ford
Class of '95

The Battalion encourages letters to the editor and will print as many as space allows. Letters must be 300 words or less and include the author's name, class, and phone number. We reserve the right to edit letters for length, style, and accuracy.

Address letters to:
The Battalion - Mail Call
013 Reed McDonald
Texas A&M University
College Station, TX
77843-1111
Fax: 409/845-2647
E-mail: Batt@tamv1.tamu.edu