

The Batt's for everyone, not just Commies

MARK SMITH

Editor in Chief
Spring 1995



Well A&M, here I am. The spring editor of the Batt. I'm still wondering how I managed to fool the Student Publications Board into selecting me. Oh well, I guess I've gone and done it. Now it's time to actually get some work done.

As my first official address to the student body - and probably my last - I want to tell you a little about your newspaper and the things I want to accomplish next semester.

The Battalion's main goal is to cover Texas A&M in the best and most objective way possible. The Batt has been working to achieve this goal for 101 years now.

In presenting the A&M community with a newspaper, we are faced with the responsibility of providing the readers with items that they want and information they need to know. Maintaining a balance between these two types of features is one of the main challenges we face day after day.

Journalists are gatekeepers of information. There are many more stories out there than any news organization is capable of covering. When deciding what to cover we have to choose which stories are more "important." Not that those stories that don't get covered have no value. The main consideration is the number of people who would be interested or affected in a story.

It is this role as gatekeeper that presents the most problems for journalists. Journalists are people, too. As much as we want to become objective machines that can remove feeling from reporting and just state the facts from all sides of an argument, we have the failing of being human. And believe me, journalists hate that. Fairness, after all, is essential to a good newspaper.

Next semester, I want to give Texas A&M more coverage of local events. That is why The Battalion was started. If we don't cover all the stories at Texas A&M, who will? To do this we'll need your help.

In order to build diversity and maintain quality at The Battalion, it is important for us to have a large pool of applicants.

If you ever have an idea for a story or think we've got something wrong, call me. The only way we will know if our product is getting the job done is if we get feedback from you. Keep us on our toes. I love talking to people who call the office.

I even enjoy the complaints sometimes. People might gripe you out, but that means they 1) read the paper, and 2) care enough about what went in to make a comment about it.

In order to help alleviate any unfairness and produce the most unbiased newspaper possible, it is important that the newsroom reflect the diversity of the campus.

Diversity in this case does not mean just racial diversity. The Battalion has to represent a cross section of A&M.

Men and women. Conservative and liberal. Black, white, Hispanic, Asian, "other." Corps and non-reg. Greek and non-Greek.

Sometimes, it is hard to balance this need for diversity and have the most qualified people working for you. Both are very important. One represents fairness in coverage and the other represents quality in reporting. In an ideal situation, you have both.

In order to build diversity at The Battalion and maintain a certain degree of quality it is important for us to have a large pool of applicants from which to choose. This might give us more work to do in selecting a staff, but it also gives us a wide range of talents to draw upon.

If you've ever had the inclination to work on a newspaper and think you might have the qualifications to get the job, come in and fill out an application. The worst we could do would be to say no - I wasn't hired the first three times I applied.

We're really not bad people. Here at The Battalion we have a saying that ideally expresses what I want to say. The Battalion - It's not just for communists anymore.

Mark Smith is a senior English and journalism major

Wanted: one perfect roommate

Student Life Programs make search bearable

Woman seeks non-smoker, must be responsible and have no pets...It's that time of year again. Is love in the air? No, it's a search for roommates.

LYNN BOOHER

Columnist



At some time or another, all of us have been through it. It was easy enough to go potluck if one were living on campus, but when looking for someone to share an apartment, house, duplex or other non-dorm home, things can be a little more difficult.

I am undergoing this search in earnest for the first time. Surprisingly enough, it is not as difficult as I had anticipated. Aside from the obvious roommate advertisements in The Battalion and hundreds of fliers posted all over campus, there is a lesser-known group that provides a roommate search service. It is the Office of Student Life Programs.

When I first arrived at the office, located in room 112 of the Koldus building (formerly known as the Student Services Building), a polite student worker smiled at me and asked if I was looking for a roommate. I replied that I was, and he asked if I had housing or if I was looking for an apartment.

As it turns out, before you even go through the process of filling out a form, they've already narrowed you down by gender, whether you have housing, what type of housing that is and if you'd like, by whether you're a graduate or international student.

When I finally got the nice blue card for women needing housing, I was pleasantly surprised by all the information it presented. Not only could I specify what my rent range was and that I wanted a place on the shuttle route, but there was a plethora of personal information questions on the back. These ranged from smoking and cleaning habits to whether I'm a night person or like to party a lot. They conveniently left several lines blank at the bottom to describe hobbies, likes and dislikes, etc.

After filling out the card, the student worker asked me to enter the information into their computer system. Now, occasion-

ally I'll balk when faced with anything more technologically sophisticated than a word processor or E-mail. But not only was this computer system user-friendly, it was pretty fun. Once you enter your card, you can run a roommate search based on up to 20 different variables.

I got too excited the first time and tried to find someone who would be exactly like me on all 20 choices. The data bank came up empty. When I had calmed down enough to manipulate only a few, however, I still came up with nothing. This was disconcerting, to say the least. Could it be that no one in A&M's vast population would be able to stand a semester with me?

After a brief search through the boxes where people had filed their cards, I came to the accurate conclusion that not everyone had entered their card into the computer system. It's a shame, really, because when you use the computer, you don't have to search manually through every single person's roommate information card.

About one hour after I had walked into the Student Life Programs office, I walked out triumphantly with a list of about 10 people who sounded like potentially great roommates. The cool thing is that because I put a card in the file, other potential roommates have seen it and called me too.

About a week after I entered my card into the system, I went back to the Student Life Programs office to see what else they have to offer. Ann Goodman, the assistant director of Student Life, agreed to talk to me.

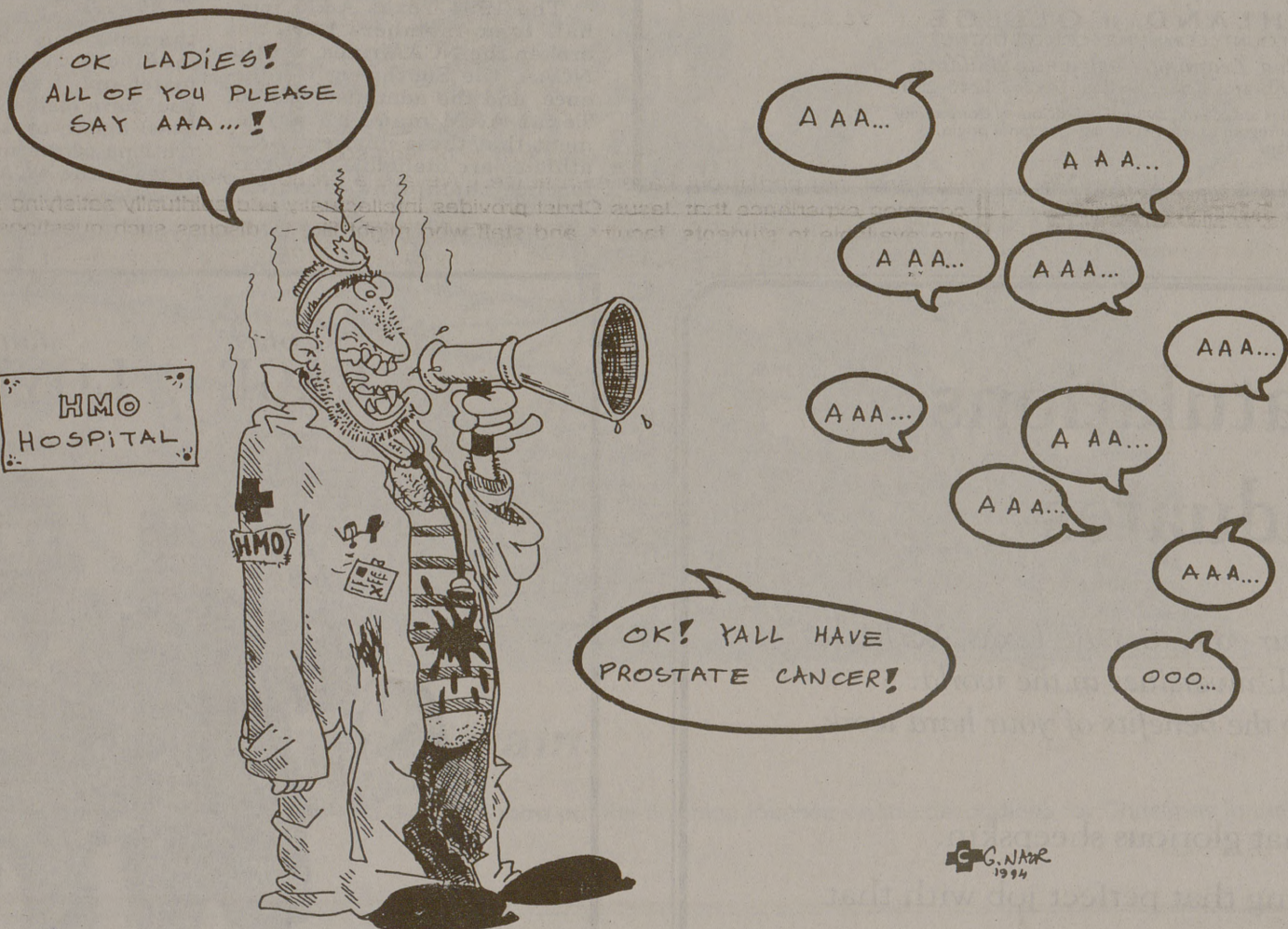
She explained that the office doesn't exist for the sole purpose of finding people roommates. It's also a useful tool for students once they've found a place to live. The center provides roommate conflict resolution for students who feel they have irreconcilable differences with their roommates. Ms. Goodman said that the vast majority of roommates walk out of the office much happier, willing to try living together again.

Not only does the office offer conflict resolution, but it can help students with lease problems. Student Life Programs works in conjunction with a lease specialist as well as an A&M lawyer. Ms. Goodman said the most common problem students have with their lease is getting things repaired in their apartments. State law specifies that an apartment manager doesn't have to repair anything until the renter puts the complaint in writing.

My roommate search should come to a happy end, and I strongly recommend that anyone else who needs a place to straight to room 112 of the Koldus building.

Lynn Booher is a junior English and psychology major

When looking for someone to share an apartment, house, duplex or other non-dorm home, things can be a little difficult.

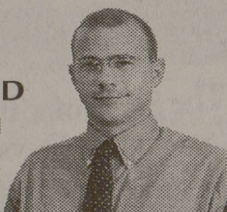


One-shot issues leave parties with an empty barrel

Republicans follow suit, begin term with controversial agenda

FRANK STANFORD

Columnist



Haiti," the Grand Old Party has proven that they are every bit as beholden to special interest groups and the more radical elements of their party as were their Democratic predecessors. I'm speaking, of course, of the decision by the Republican leadership to make prayer in public schools one of their main agenda items.

Good Grief. The last time I checked, the U.S. budget deficit was still wildly out of control, violent crime was plaguing our cities, average Americans were still forced to work through the month of May just to pay their taxes, welfare had not been reformed, war loomed in Bosnia, interest rates were going through the roof... (I better stop before I jump out the window).

With all of this "little stuff" to worry about, Newt and his gang are taking a moment of personal reflection to decide that the first issue for our new Congress to consider is whether little Jasper and Eunice at Sunnydale Elementary ought to take some time out from Red-Rover, Red Rover to offer up their deepest introspections to the Almighty.

I'm not here to debate the divine impact that a little silent vesper will have on Jasper's next finger-painting

project, or to bemoan the awkwardness felt by the little girl sitting next to Eunice, whose parents don't happen to belong to the Third Southern Grace Zen Bible Church of Christ.

What stuns me the most is the reckless lack of political savvy exhibited by the GOP leadership in choosing this issue as a primary initiative. Consider Clinton's wishy-washy treatment of gays in the military; it's as if there is a genetic virus embedded in all politicians forcing them to engage in self-destruction as soon as they start singing their electoral victory songs.

It seems to me that Newt and Dole could have led with some catchier tunes. How about "Take it to the [Term] Limit," "The Line Item Veto Cha-Cha" and that ol' rap favorite, "Me and my Homies Want a Balanced Budget Amendment in the Hood." Once a majority in

Congress starts humming these toe-tappers in unison, perhaps the GOP could be forgiven for caving in to the radical right and indulging in ill-considered attempts to reattach the separation of church and state and/or limit a woman's control over her own body. Like it or not, the unfortunate truth is that the debate over prayer in public schools, like the abortion issue, is a symbolic flashpoint for the ongoing struggle between morality and practicality in the U.S. Many special interest factions seem determined to use our national political forum to push religious gimmicks on us as a

"quick fix" solution to the complicated and pervasive

erosion of fundamental core values in America.

This is a nation used to having all of our fears and conflicts resolved within the bounds of a standard 30 minute television program. We are all desperate to find a soundbite solution to moral decay so we don't have to really understand the underlying problems. Is the rate of violent crime out of control? Hey! We'll just coerce our kids to pray at school. Are the number of illegitimate births skyrocketing? Hm, oh yeah, let's abolish legal abortion and force these kids to have unwanted babies so everyone is punished - mom, kids and taxpayers.

The primary theme of the mid-term election was a clear message that the electorate was sick and tired of watching a bunch of malicious, self-indulgent, dishonest megalomaniacs fiddle and diddle around in Washington while the rest of the country is on a one-way ticket to hell in a handbasket. The only thing surprising about the dramatic outcome of the election was

that it took voters this long to act so decisively.

The GOP has been given a grave responsibility and a rare opportunity. As R.C. Slocum would say, if they "execute well" they will be credited for having redirected the country and will have positioned themselves for long-term control over the U.S. political landscape. However, if they persist in concentrating on ideological timebombs instead of practical solutions, the Republicans will be thrown out on their keesters just as fast in 1996 as the Democrats were in 1994.

Frank Stanford is a philosophy graduate student

THE BATTALION Editorial Board

Belinda Blancarte, Editor in chief
Mark Evans, Managing editor
Jenny Magee, Opinion editor
J. Sterling Hayman, Asst. opinion editor

Editorials appearing in The Battalion reflect the views of the editorial board. They do not necessarily reflect the opinions of other Battalion staff members, the Texas A&M student body, regents, administration, faculty or staff.

Columns, guest columns, cartoons and letters express the opinions of the authors. Contact the opinion editor for information on submitting guest columns.

EDITORIAL

WORLD AIDS DAY

Precaution can never be taken too seriously

In hopes of stopping the spread of the HIV/AIDS virus World AIDS Day brings the burden of those infected with the disease and the suffering of their families to our attention.

Each year, World AIDS Day is celebrated on Dec. 1. This year's theme "AIDS and Families: Protect and Care for the Ones We Love" promotes the role of relationships in preventing this disease.

It is important we realize that protecting "relationships" is not limited to those born of blood, marriage, sexual partnership or adoption. Everyone should take responsibility in helping friends, roommates and fellow students fight the disease.

According to the World Health Organization, an estimated 13 million men, women and children are infected with HIV or have AIDS.

Since the first World AIDS Day in 1988, Rock Hudson, Pedro Zamora and Ryan White have all lost their lives to the disease. Magic Johnson no longer plays for the L.A. Lakers.

AIDS victims come from places all around the United States and all around the world. The disease does not discriminate against age, sex or socioeconomic background.

AIDS is a threat to us all. While abstinence is the only true form of safe sex, using a condom reduces the risk of passing or receiving the virus. Today, unprotected sex no longer just offers the threat of unwanted pregnancy. Sex without a condom can be deadly.

Because the HIV virus can be passed through blood and bodily secretions, it is important to be careful around accidents and other situations that involve open sores or wounds.

As part of World AIDS Day, take part in some of the many activities today. Have your blood tested at the AP Beutel Health Center. Attend a lecture on AIDS awareness at the MSC.

Learn as much as possible to protect yourself, your family and friends from the disease.

Celebrate the observance of World AIDS Day today. But continue to learn about the disease and work to protect the well-being both infected and uninfected people every day.