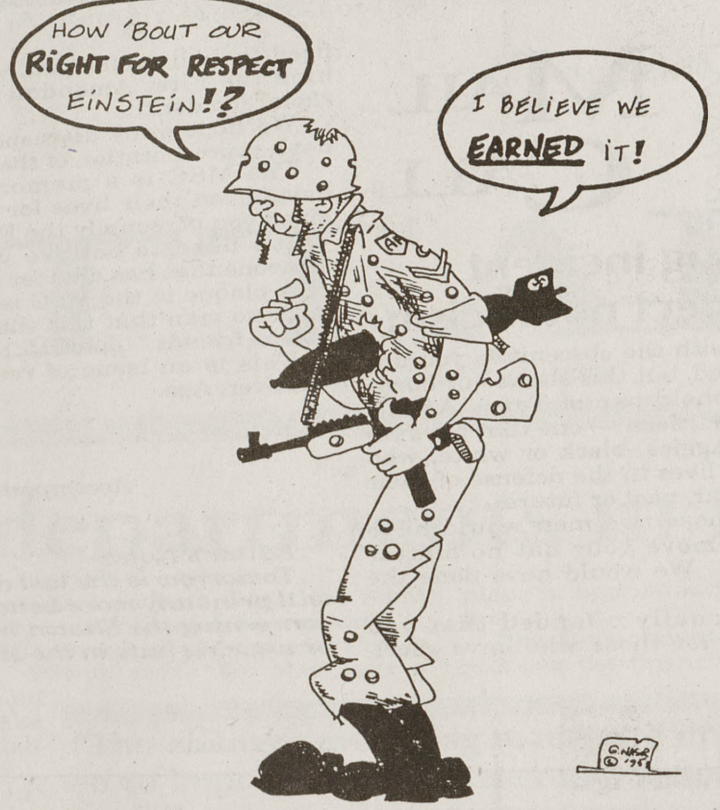


Thursday • January 19, 1995



Running the marathon of life

Enduring struggle filled with joy, tears, insight

Last year, I decided that I would kinda like to run a marathon. Twenty-six miles sounded like a long way sure, but at the time the distance didn't seem real. At the time it was only a thought. It faded as quickly as my eyes shifted from an advertisement with the stick figure runners.

JENNY MAGEE
COLUMNIST



Somehow that thought blossomed into a goal. Finishing the marathon became a necessity. For an entire year, as I trained, I envisioned crossing the finish line. The triumph... the glory... Each of my daily work-outs brought the possibility of finishing closer to reality.

Now just because I began to believe I could actually run a marathon did not mean that the population at large, namely my relatives and friends, believed that I (or any other human being) could run 26 miles straight.

"You're gonna do what? Are you crazy?" "You know that Greek dude, the one with the torch... well... he died after he ran 26 miles."

"Should we wait for you at the finish line with a coffin?" The list of encouraging words was endless.

Everyone focused on the distance, the pain and the stress, the fatigue. No one thought about the process — including myself. At the time, I thought I was training for the sole purpose of crossing the finish line.

So there I was at 7:45 am on Jan. 15, Sunday morning, at the epoch of my training. Actually, I was freezing my butt off in front of the George R. Brown Convention Center in Houston

along with the other 7,000 people who would be my neighbors in the moving insane asylum. 8:00 am. Bang. We were off. Seven thousand people leapt forward simultaneously into an awesome sprint. "Chariots of Fire" bellowed in the background, as we tore away from the starting line. Well, not exactly. Actually we didn't even move for about two minutes. Then we sort of ran/walked for a mile and a half until the crowd thinned out enough to move.

During the herding process, a woman in front of me tripped on a speed bump-like slab of cement and fell. I proceeded to tumble over her, crashing knee-first into the pavement. My day of glory began with a resounding thud.

For a moment, while staring at the cement, I wondered why exactly I was doing this. Then I remembered all the other cement. Cement I had pounded back and forth across for an entire year getting ready for this day.

A friend helped me up — the race began. The sky was clear, blue glass with those little whipped cream clouds. The breeze was just cool enough to keep my sweat glands under control. But the thing that made the race different any of my typical training runs was the people. Everywhere along the course there were people cheering the runners on. In the midst of such support, I felt a power grow inside me. I was invincible, or at least I was running really fast.

When I saw my parents, my sister and my boyfriend cheering me on, I

was running away and coming home at the same time. I was running some miles for everyone I love. And other miles I was just running for myself.

The thing about being in a constant state of motion for a long period of time is that your body gets to the point where it's moving but you can't feel it. This is runner's euphoria.

During this time, I lived in my mind. I ran back to birth and trotted ahead to death.

The marathon is about suffering for an accomplishment and struggling to reach a goal. It is like life, but not really. Life is much harder.

No one cheers us on every step of the way during everyday life. We don't start our classes at the beginning of the semester with the wave. We celebrate at graduation. We normally don't tell the ones we love how wonderful they are. No, we wait for a holiday or a fight. Life normally lacks the intermediate cheering process. We applaud the large leaps and shun the steps.

In actuality, hum-drum, everyday turmoil often wears on us faster than tackling a large project. Think about how many projects fail in the first mile because no one is there to help us when we fall.

I will always cherish this experience. It was wonderful to have the most important people in my life there when I crossed the finish line, but it was more wonderful that they were there along the way.

Crossing the finish line wasn't the most important step of the marathon, it just happened to be the last one.

Jenny Magee is a junior journalism major

Tradition should be respected from all

This letter is in regards to the "uncovering" incident with Mr. Shawn Williams in the Memorial Student Center. Mr. Williams has joined a group of Americans who believe their rights take precedence over their duties as citizens. I hate to give them the attention they are desperately seeking. However I feel they need to be reminded, especially a person in his leadership position, that along with rights came responsibilities and respect.

The persons commemorated by the Memorial Student Center sacrificed their lives for the rights of all Americans; Red, White, and Blue.

Jeff Strauss
Class of '98

Racism, discrimination didn't play a part

There is a large brass plaque in the MSC which reads: "Greater love hath no man than this that a man lay down his life for his friends." John 15:14 Underneath this statement are the names of Aggies who have given their lives in defense of our country in past wars. It reminds me of part of a poem by the African American Paul Lawrence Dunbar called "The Colored Soldiers".

"...In the early days you scorned them, And with many a flit and flout, Said these battles are the whiteman's And the whites will fight them out, Then you called the Colored Soldiers, And they answered you call..." Are you, Shawn Williams, too proud to bare your head for men whether they be us or them, black or white, red or yellow, brown or pink, green or blue, purple or violet? Talk of your racism and minority discrimination. We know the truth.

John Williams
Class of '94

MAIL CALL

Assailants, not victim were wrong in actions

According to an article on January 17, two men assaulted Shawn Williams for not removing his hat in the MSC. By exercising his freedom of expression, Mr. Williams experienced a completely inappropriate incident that never should have occurred. I believe the aggressive, offensive behavior displayed toward Mr. Williams must not be condoned nor repeated. He was not wrong in his action. However, the assailants were.

Yet, I would like to pose a simple question. Why not remove the hat? After all, what does the MSC stand for? It stands as a war memorial to those who have given their lives in defense of the freedoms we hold so dear.

I realize that this means little to some people, but put yourselves in the place of those soldiers or their family members. Men and women died for no particular race nor religion, but for the PEOPLE of the United States of America.

Have we lost respect for the memories of those who gave up everything to defend this country and make it what it is today? Let's put this type of situation in perspective. If, while visiting the MLK Center, I saw a sign requesting I remove my hat, I certainly would, even though I have the right to wear it. Dr. King was a great man. He deserves the respect of all Americans. Do those service men and women who died for this country not deserve the same?

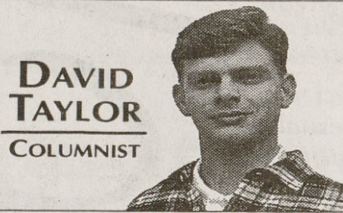
Yes, it's your right to wear a hat in the MSC, but if you do, please consider why you still have that right.

Matt Stahman
Graduate Student

Democratic agenda failed

Party lost elections because policies didn't solve problems

Just when Bill Clinton thought it was safe to read the Opinion Page... Allow me to introduce myself: I'm your friendly voice of reason from the Right. Yep, I'm a Conservative writing for The Battalion (sit down and breathe deeply if necessary).



DAVID TAYLOR
COLUMNIST

Before finals, I went out to dinner with a terrific young woman (yes, I actually had a date). We spent a lot of time talking about ways women tell men they aren't interested. She was amazed at how we men never seem to get the clue. (I took mental notes because I knew my roommates would want to hear this and because I wondered whether she was trying to tell me something.)

My beautiful date got me thinking. Last November's elections seemed to me to be a great big clue... and many in Washington still hadn't gotten it.

Those of you from Beaumont may remember Jack Brooks. He used to be your Representative. According to Mr. Brooks, he lost the election because the people from Beaumont just didn't understand his message. I heard this explanation over and over from Democrats who lost.

Message understood, send out your resumes. Let's face it, the policies and plans that these people have championed for the past 40 years have landed us in a world of hurt. Of course it is our generation that will get to fix this mess and pay the bills. The people who have been running things recently spent too much time setting up communes and inhaling — well, most of them.

However, one thing they did that we should do more: they got involved. Granted, they may not remember much of it, but our parents' generation changed things. Now it's our turn. I've spent some time thinking over some simple clues I want to offer.

Clue one: Welfare... we give money to the poor; therefore, we are doing something — therefore we care.

Remember, the 60's were all about caring... peace, love, roll that thing tighter, etc. The result is that people have no incentive to work. In fact, the percentage of population below the poverty line now is about the same as when LBJ took-off on his Great Society adventure.

The government has spent trillions on this failure of a plan. (That's 1,000,000,000,000+ — or enough to pay off my

THE BATTALION
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EDITORIAL

AGONIZING AUDIT

A&M Administration must seek to avoid future problems with new policies.

Texas A&M has received its fair share of negative publicity in recent months. The state audit results released on January 6 have added even more fuel to this never-ending fire. The audit revealed that the University has consistently ignored state policies, procedures and laws.

Texas A&M has always been famous for its "honor, credibility and integrity," but due to the carelessness of some officials, this image has recently been somewhat tarnished.

Administrators and top officials are appointed to their positions not only with the expectation of responsible job performance, but also to represent the University in the most dignified and positive manner possible. When these officials fail to fulfill these requirements and waste millions of dollars, because of mismanagement, they are not best serving the interests of the students, faculty or image Texas A&M University.

The irresponsible manner in which the system has been managed has been made apparent by several recent gaffs. Ross Margraves, former chairman of

the Board of Regents, resigned while being investigated by the Texas Rangers for illegally purchasing alcohol with state funds. A cogeneration power plant, which was to cost A&M up to \$120 million, was scrapped because of funding confusion. And former vice-president for finance and administration Robert Smith was convicted of soliciting gifts as a public servant.

Such actions of mismanagement are inexcusable and have allowed scandal to embarrass the students and alumni of the school.

If the University administrators expect the students to abide by the Aggie Code of Honor, they too should live up to these standards. By being wasteful and irresponsible, top officials do not set good examples for the student body to follow.

Better management procedures have been implemented, but this is no sure guarantee that the same sort of problems will not arise again. For A&M's credibility to be restored, existing problems must be resolved and future ones avoided.



student loans.) Time for a new idea. The Republicans' Contract With America makes for some interesting reading (Santa Claus gave it to me). The Contract, co-authored by House Majority Leader Dick Armey of Texas, offers the Personal Responsibility Act (PRA). To summarize, the PRA transfers effective control to the states and stops payments to deadbeats who can work, but won't.

Clue 2: Crime. Here's a great plan to cure crime on the streets of America — gun control. Everybody knows that if something is illegal, it won't happen. For example, my Celica has never exceeded the legally posted speed limit, and gee, Wally, I've never been passed by anyone else speeding either.

Remember that incident in front of the White House last semester? I'll remind you. While out for a walk one brisk fall day, it seems that a certain young man thought it would be a splendid idea to have target practice on our esteemed New Democrat's private residence.

Boys and girls, this incident never happened. Why, you ask? Well for several years now personal possession of any firearm has been illegal in Washington D.C. And we all know that if they make a problem illegal then that problem will go away.

By the way, did anyone else notice what kind of weapon was used? It couldn't have been an assault rifle... those were just made illegal the previous month. It's time to treat the disease, not the symptom.

For the third clue let's ask the elementary school kids in Barrington, Rhode Island, about their Christmas pageant. It seems the superintendent of schools found the word "Christ" too offensive to be in the Christmas program. Our hero therefore decided that the children could sing no song with "Christ" in it.

Merry — mas? It seems that separation of church and state has become the removal of all church from the state. What's left when you take away the values and morals taught by religion? Ever hear of ethics? You know — those rules that Congressmen follow. Does anyone really think this country would be better if we all behaved like Congressmen?

Is this what we want? It's up to us. We can make a difference, but we have to do something.

Right now, I have to figure out what my date meant.

David Taylor is a senior management major