

THE BATTALION
Established in 1893

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Resounding bang starts off new year

Gun fired at vehicle on Texas freeway

The crowd lifted their glasses of complementary champagne and shouted "Screw 1994!" as the final minute of last year ticked away. I was spending New Year's Eve out dancing and partying among formally clad strangers for the first time ever. But my joy at ringing in the new year could not equal that of my peers because my mind was stuck on what happened an hour earlier.

KATHERINE ARNOLD
GUEST COLUMNIST

"crack down on crime." If I remember correctly, we have been cracking down on crime for quite a while now, to no avail. Congress also wants to build more prisons. So another thought was "OK, 1995 will bring less crime because more people will be locked up, but that's not necessarily true, in part because of people like me.

We were shot at on the freeway. I was riding in a car with two friends on San Antonio's Loop 410. We were in the slow lane when a blue Cadillac sped up behind us and tailgated for a while. My friend could not turn out of the lane or go faster, so she muttered to herself "Where the hell am I supposed to go?" As the car raced off the next exit, a friend in the back seat gave the car the finger. Rude, yes, but a normal occurrence among obnoxious drivers. The car matched our speed on the access road. I saw him roll down his window and thought to myself "Ha, ha, he's probably going to shoot us."

With that thought in mind, all I could do was stare in dumb horror as the mustached man reached over to the passenger seat, picked up a gun, stuck it out the window and fired.

We were all OK, but in the two minutes following about 10,000 thoughts ran through my head. I don't consider myself a sheltered person; I'm not a wimp for being shaken up by this. It's hard to brush it off and say, "Oh well, violence is everywhere," like everyone usually does after the media reports on local violence.

One of those millions of thoughts in my non-politically oriented mind was "What ever happened to gun control?" I am certainly not from an anti-gun family. One of my grandfathers just returned from deer-hunting, and my other grandfather was a state patrolman for 28 years.

The only gun I have ever held, however, is a friend's shotgun, which she kept to ward off any might be intruders. She does not even a single bullet for that gun.

Self-defense is an arguable point, but why do people need guns anyway? To protect themselves from people with bigger guns? Why do we need the spiffy new bullets that will be a six inch hold in its victim? To make a really big statement?

The plan for the 104th Congress is to discuss a crime bill. The bill will

I was shaken up by being shot at — so shaken up that I didn't try to look at the license plates or report what I did know to the police. More prisons aren't going to help innocent freeway travelers or residents in homes that fall prey to drive-by shootings. I began to think about something that still troubles me. Forget about everything else — something in that man's mind made him believe that an acceptable response to being stuck on the freeway was to shoot at the person in front of him.

Right and wrong have varied definitions, but every religion, race and economic level ought to come to some agreement. Much of that middle ground is found in the basic idea of government: a social contract. But government cannot just be. It has to work.

I'm not saying we ought to run right out there and join a political party and make them take quick action. The problems in this country run deeper than a single bill passed in Congress.

We learn our values at home. We are raised in a secure environment and learn the value of our time through school and work. But many Americans are not afforded the best opportunities to learn these morals. Children of broken or unstable homes often grow up with the sense of right and wrong missing from their lives.

As educated people, we should make a point of learning what we can do to help others learn morality. How we do this — I have no clue. One of my goals is to learn how I can help make a better and safer world for the children of the infamous Generation X. It is very idealistic, yes, but this resolution did not cross my mind until 11 p.m. on New Year's Eve.

While most people greeted the New Year with a joyous toast and a smile, mine was brought in with the shot of a handgun pointed at me.

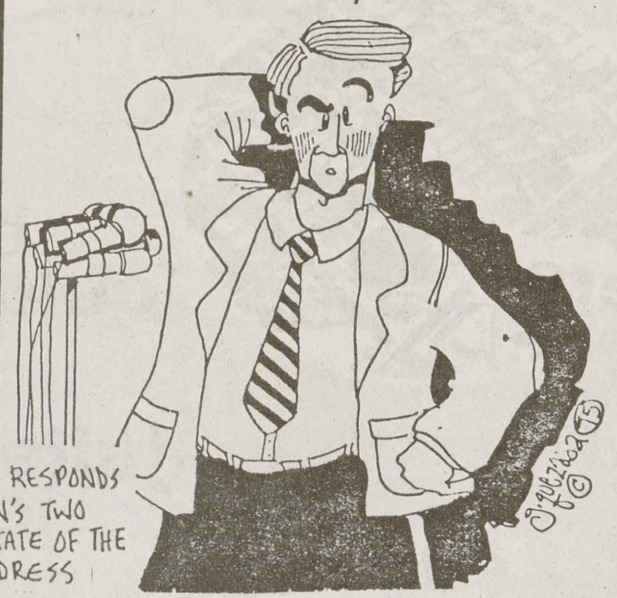
So a little world improvement doesn't sound so bad.

Katherine Arnold is a sophomore journalism major

CLINTON WON'T CATER THE CONSERVATIVES ALONE OR THE LIBERALS ALONE. IT MAKES ME MAD THAT HE'S TRYING TO MEET BOTH OUR NEEDS!



!!! NOW WAIT JUST A SECOND!?!



CONGRESS RESPONDS TO CLINTON'S TWO SIDED STATE OF THE UNION ADDRESS

Abortion stances confused

Within the past two years, there have been three separate incidents of murder motivated by a gunman's anti-abortion sentiments.

JIM PAWLIKOWSKI
COLUMNIST

Dr. David Gunn was targeted and shot by an anti-abortion militant in March 1993. In June 1994, Paul Hill shot and killed a doctor who performed abortions and his escort outside a Pensacola, Florida abortion clinic. And just last month two abortion clinic workers in Brookline, Massachusetts were killed by an anti-abortion assassin's bullet. John Salvi stands accused of the crime.

Each of these murders was motivated by the idea that violence is a justified response to abortion. Other anti-abortion extremists, though they have not resorted to murder, have initiated a campaign of violence against abortion providers, including firebombing clinics and stalking doctors and their families.

This violence is a major setback for the pro-life movement. The actions of these people and others who have committed acts of violence and terrorism at abortion clinics are not pro-life in any sense of the word.

However, the media and the more liberal TV talk show hosts would have us believe that these anti-abortion extremists represent the mainstream pro-life movement. Donahue, Sally and Geraldo just love to put people who support the killing of abortion doctors up on stage and call them pro-life activists.

Then the abortion rights people on the other side can denounce their radical ideas, and rightly so, and proceed to associate those extremists with the mainstream pro-life movement.

The all-wise audience, horrified by the opinions of the anti-abortionist, cheer and applaud anything that the other side says, including their rantings and ravings against the truly pro-life.

A distinction needs to be drawn between anti-abortion and pro-life that is usually neglected in the public debate. Pro-life denotes one who respects the dignity of all human life, from conception to natural death. While this stance includes the idea that abortion is morally wrong, it also includes the idea that all human life has an inherent moral worth.

Cardinal Joseph Bernardin, the Roman Catholic archbishop of Chicago, has written and spoken extensively about "a consistent ethic of life." He argues that a variety of life issues including opposition to abortion and euthanasia, compassion for AIDS victims and aid to the poor and homeless, among others, are all interconnected by a "seamless garment" of respect for the dignity of human life.

The term anti-abortion indicates the single-minded view that abortion is wrong and that it must be stopped by any means necessary. When this view includes the idea the violence against human life (i.e. terrorizing abortion clinic workers, doctors, and even their families) is justified to prevent violence against human life (i.e. abortion), the seamless garment has been ripped.

Wanda Franz, National Right to Life Committee President, put it best. "The pro-life movement is the movement of love and

respect for life. Pro-lifers oppose violence directed toward abortion providers."

Unfortunately, the violence and the vocal supporters of violent means to restrict abortion overshadow these voices of reason.

Paul Hill justified his actions on the premise that the murder of one abortion doctor would save the lives of many unborn children. Even if it is true that the murder prevented some abortions from being performed, his actions violate the important moral norm that the ends do not justify the means.

In his anti-abortion zeal, he lost sight of what it means to respect the dignity of human life at all its stages, from conception to natural death. He became so narrowly focused on the issue of abortion that he was willing to abandon the very philosophical principles which provided the foundation for his beliefs in the first place.

However, the most extreme situations grab the headlines. As a result, the pro-life movement has become associated with this anti-abortion violence. This has hindered the efforts of those who peacefully work through legislative means to restrict abortion or protest or pray outside clinics

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to raise the consciousness of those who do not respect the dignity of human life. The more closely these peaceful activists are associated with the violent ones, the less seriously they are taken.

While pro-life organizations have made an effort to distance themselves from the violence, due to the failure of the media and the public discourse to distinguish between pro-life and anti-abortion, they have met with limited success.

John Salvi did not help matters when he said if acquitted, he wants to become a priest.

The Catholic Church has spoken firmly against the violence. Cardinal John O'Connor of New York, so disgusted with the murder and violence that anti-abortion extremists have chosen as their means, said, "If anyone has the urge to kill an abortionist, let him kill me instead. That's about as clearly as I can renounce such madness."

In fact, Cardinal O'Connor has even asked Catholics to not protest directly in front of abortion clinics anymore to avoid association with the violence.

The disrespect for life manifested in abortion must be answered with a compassionate, positive respect for life, not more death.

Jim Pawlikowski is a junior chemical engineering major



MAIL CALL

Suspension of licenses after breathalyzer refusal good idea

I strongly disagree with last Wednesday's editorial, in which the author rails against the recently passed law allowing the suspension of one's drivers' license for 90 days if he or she refuses to take a breathalyzer test.

The author claims such a law is a violation of our rights, perhaps even the Fourth and Fifth Amendments.

There is exactly ONE plausible reason a driver would refuse a breathalyzer test, and that is if he or she is guilty. If that is the case, then the person is a clear menace to other drivers' lives and ought to be off the road. Case closed.

I suppose a sober person might refuse the test simply on a matter of principle, claiming it violates his rights, but this just isn't true.

Blowing into a hand-held device for a police officer may be slightly humiliating, but it is neither physically nor psychologically damaging.

It is not "unreasonable," so the Fourth does not apply. Furthermore, simply being pulled over does not constitute a "criminal case," so the Fifth is also inapplicable. You may say I'm just splitting hairs here, but I think the Founding Fathers considered their words very carefully and meant exactly what they said.

This common-sense law does not infringe on anyone's freedom in the slightest, and any mere embarrassment suffered is far outweighed by the lives saved.

*Mark A. Smith
Class of '94*

Column on homelessness filled with numerous errors

Elizabeth Preston's interpretations in "Losing sight of the Problem" (1/26/95) are completely erroneous. She has no grasp on the role of government in a democracy. Nor does she understand what the new House Republican majority wants to do in order to make the federal government more efficient and democratic rather than full of bureaucracy and socialism.

Next, she misinterprets the "Contract with America." Denying government services to legal aliens and welfare to unwed teenage mothers is justified. Aliens aren't citizens, and they don't help pay for the services they receive. And unwed, teenage mothers symbolize personal irresponsibility on the part of both the mother and the father. To claim opportunity, one must first accept personal responsibility.

Also, Republicans never suggested eradication of welfare, just its reformation. I agree we will have to change our national outlook drastically but away from the socialistic redistribution of wealth back to our founding principles of democracy and rugged individualism.

*Aaron Wendt
Class of '98*

Political correctness divides rather than joining people

I wish to state that I adamantly believe in EVERYONE'S individual right to choose their lifestyles, however, this insane idiosyncrasy of PC perplexes me into believing some Americans may not be proud of this country. I can understand an individual's desire to be seen in a different light, but does this not alienate us? Is there no better way to distinguish ourselves than by joining groups of "our kind"?

I believe we will never become as strong a country as we can unless people surmount these notions of PC, let us work together and abolish

these separate and not equal ideals. Thank you, good luck and Gig 'Em!

*Douglas A. Ramirez
Class of '92/96*

Students upset at coverage of leadership conference

I have found the past couple of issues of The Battalion very offensive as well as insensitive to the African American culture at TAMU.

The latest offensive was the cover story about the SBSLC weekend conference ending in gunfire. The SBSLC is the largest conference in the Southwest. There was no mention of these nationally known African-Americans nor of the issues of what they spoke upon. There was no mention of the Pan-Hellenic party that took place without any problems. None of the previously mentioned activities were referred to in The Battalion. I may be wrong but, there seems to be some slanted writing in The Battalion when dealing with African-Americans and their activities on campus.

If race relations at TAMU are expected to become better, there needs to be some sensitivity displayed by all. It is incumbent upon The Battalion as a form of mass communication to not propagate racism and/or insensitivity to past experiences as well as current plights of other cultures. There is constant talk around this institution about multiculturalism and diversity, but are there any true committed actions that are being taken to make the TAMU environment conducive for all that are in attendance including faculty and staff. Maybe we need to re-evaluate our definition of multiculturalism and diversity.

*Carlos V. Edwards
A&M staff*

*As a strong supporter of the SBSLC, I was very disappointed to see the headline in this past Monday's Battalion entitled "SBSLC Weekend Conference Ends in Gunfire." It is my understanding that this incident was not related to the conference and occurred well-after the conference

had ended. As someone who has attended every conference since its beginning, I can tell you that this conference is outstanding in every respect. The headline sends a negative message to those in our university community who did not attend the conference and who do not know the truth about this incident. Those of us who work with students know how important, yet how difficult it is to recruit and retain minority students at Texas A&M. There are many positive things about Texas A&M, however it takes many positive messages to counteract one negative ones, even if it is wrong, as in the case of this headline. The SBSLC makes a tremendous, positive impact on Texas A&M. Your headline is a disservice to this outstanding event.

*Ron Sasse
Director of Residence Life and Housing*

*I hope that the utter lack of informative and responsible journalism in regards to the Southwestern Black Student Leadership Conference does not lead anyone to think that we, as African-Americans, are incapable of conducting ourselves responsibly. Notice that though no suspects were originally mentioned, the news in itself has perpetuated stereotypes that have been going on so long that we are beginning to believe them ourselves. It has long been time to refute and question those stereotypes and the machines that still continue to produce them. African-Americans, we with all races, possess untold success stories that demand to be told. Let us overlook the many "rotten apple," stories covered by newspapers and instead focus on the success stories that we have in all of us.

*Paul Jackson
Graduate Student*

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