

## Joycelyn Elders — a prescription for our ailing society

*"I'm not a politician, I'm a physician. I'm about improving the health of all Americans. I'm not about getting elected to public office."*

— Joycelyn Elders



**STERLING HAYMAN**  
OPINION EDITOR

Tonight former Surgeon General Joycelyn Elders will address the student body of Texas A&M University. Only four months after President Clinton called for her resignation, she is again back in the limelight, spreading her "prescriptions for an ailing society."

These same prescriptions have continually kept Elders under the surgical knife of the religious right, the Republican party and many other conservative organizations. Just what remedies does Elders propose for our society, and why are they the subject of much criticism and scrutiny?

At a news conference after a World AIDS Day event at the United Nations, Elders was asked whether she would promote masturbation as a way to help prevent sexually transmitted diseases. Unlike most politicians, who would have hem-hawed around the question, Elders gave a straightforward answer.

"With regard to masturbation," Elders said, "I think that it is something that is part of human sexuality and part of something that perhaps should be taught."

The public went crazy. "Did she say masturbation?" "Did you hear what she said should be taught in school?" "Has she lost her freakin' mind?" The world was in a frenzy because a certified physician discussed "that 'M' word."

Oops! We must have forgotten that masturbation is seldom practiced in today's society. A Chicago study indicates that only 72 percent of all adults routinely practice masturbation. They must all be freaks or something.

What many people misconstrued were Elders' intentions. She was not advocating teaching the nation's population of grade schoolers the specific techniques of self-gratification. She was instead attempting to erase the stigma on masturbation that, for years, has caused millions of people to feel ashamed, guilty or sinful.

Perhaps if the myths of masturbation were taught at an appropriate age, there would be fewer teenage pregnancies and tragic AIDS cases. It is a shame that we, as a society, refuse to openly discuss the single aspect of human sexuality that causes no harm to others. Yet unwed mothers, bisexual swingers and promiscuous teens are common topics on talk shows and prime-time television. Oh well, I guess if sexuality should not be taught in schools, then it's up to cable TV to shape

and mold our kids. Go figure ...

Far too much attention has centered on Elders' feelings on masturbation. The nation allowed the media to define an outstanding figure by one remark blown out of proportion.

What many do not realize is that Elders brought many new perspectives to the table.

She was an active crusader for equal rights of all Americans, regardless of their race, gender or sexual orientation.

### But most importantly, she was an advocate of common sense. The time was right for her message.

She fought to protect the rights of women to have access to safe and legal abortions.

She worked to make sure that contraceptive devices are available to those who needed them — a proactive measure to help decrease the need for abortions.

She helped to ensure that students in public schools are taught sex education.

She attempted to increase government spending for AIDS research and education.

She thought that the Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts should not discriminate against children with different sexual orientations.

She searched for different solutions to fight the ever-growing drug problems of the country.

But most importantly, she was an advocate of common sense. While trying to improve the condition of our country, she was not afraid to sacrifice her own image.

Because she was concerned with the health of the nation and not her own popularity, she was able to say what was needed without fear of political repercussions.

Unfortunately, Elders became a political target.

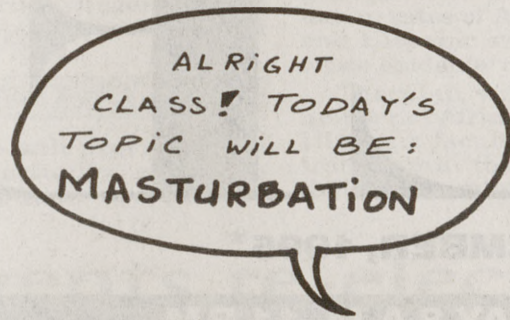
Already weakened by the mid-term election losses, Clinton was advised to fire Elders because she was considered a political liability. Clinton's call for her resignation may have increased his popularity, but ultimately, it hurt the nation.

We should not expect the U.S. Surgeon General to be a passive figurehead. Elders certainly was not. She was bold, assertive and had no reservations against challenging the status quo. She set an example for the future leaders of our nation.

Elders' problem was that she was saying the things that needed to be said. The time was right for her message. Too bad much of the American public wasn't.

Joycelyn Elders was not before her time — unfortunately, we were behind ours.

*Sterling Hayman is a junior political science major*



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## Baseball will never return to original state after strike

Well, the strike is over. The major league baseball Player's Association agreed to return to work after U.S. District Judge Sonia Sotomayor ordered the injunction that reinstated last year's labor system.

Now we are back from whence we began. This Seven Month's War has ended in a bitter truce that accomplishes nothing for either the owners or the players. The owners must pre-empt over a system that threatens to bankrupt them, and the players gave no assurance that they will not strike again if the owners attempt to implement any further changes.

Like the Korea and Vietnam, the Seven Month's War ended without truce peace. Only the shooting has stopped; a cold war still rages.

In the midst of all of this, the only reason the sport matters anyway—the fans—suffered the most casualties. The war inflicted deep wounds on innocent bystanders—the fans who bought the overpriced tickets to watch the overpaid players play the game at its best.

Throughout the 20th century, baseball has been the dominant sport in American culture. Every red-blooded American male would play catch with his dad and play pickup games in a vacant lot or empty field after school with his friends. The game was a much a part of America as Mom and apple pie.

Sadly, baseball is no longer the national pastime that captures the imagination of our youth. This latest strike has shattered the illusion of the baseball diamond as the field of dreams.

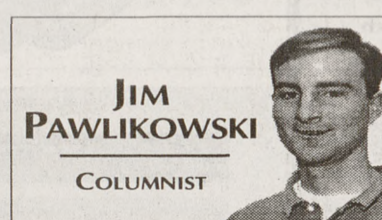
While the strike is not the unique cause of the decline of baseball as our national game, it has laid to rest any doubt that baseball has lost its mythical status.

It is no longer a game that men play for the pure thrill of it. It is a business in which highly skilled professionals sell their skills to the highest bidder.

The fact that players are now in a position to demand higher salaries is not a bad development. Before free agency, baseball players were basically slaves to be bought or sold by the owners. They had little leverage in negotiating their contracts and served as cogs in the owners' money machine.

They played under conditions which would actually justify a strike. Yet they played. They played for love of the game.

While there are still examples of true sportsmen in baseball, they are harder to come by. Players today conduct their own little personal strikes by not reporting to training camp until their contract is renegotiated. Free agents turn their backs on cities and



**JIM PAWLIKOWSKI**  
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fans that made them stars and move to another team for more money.

The powers that be in baseball have shown that economic concerns outweigh the importance of the fans. Disagreements over salary caps and binding arbitration took precedence over finishing a pennant race and having a World Series.

Both sides are equally to blame. The fact that 1994 was the first time since 1902 that there was no World Series apparently did not bother either of the parties enough to prompt a quick compromise.

This stubbornness has damaged the public's confidence in the game. It is apparent that players and owners care more about money than the fans who love the game. While baseball will survive, it is not without serious damage.

There have been strikes before, and each one was supposed to be the end of baseball as we know it. The public was supposed to turn its back on the sport and say it will not support this cold-hearted business anymore. That did not happen before, nor will it happen now.

However, this latest strike is a bit more serious due to its length and the fact that it destroyed the continuity of baseball by aborting a good season. Records that might have been broken, namely Roger Maris's 61 home runs, still stand because Ken Griffey, Jr., Matt Williams, and Frank Thomas did not have the chance to finish a full 162 games.

Baseball has not faced this serious a blow to its image since the "Black Sox" scandal of 1919, when eight members of the Chicago White Sox accepted bribes to throw the World Series. This traumatic incident prompted the owners to appoint a commissioner to act "in the best interests of baseball." Kenesaw Mountain Landis accepted this job and restored the integrity of baseball with the power and wisdom of a benevolent dictator.

As in 1919, baseball today has no leader unaccountable to the owners or players. Had there been a commissioner, the strike probably could have been avoided.

He would have forged a compromise to save the season.

Given baseball's current state, it will take a leader like Landis himself to deal with economic concerns and labor negotiations, yet shift focus away from the business and towards the game.

Baseball will never return to the way it used to be. This is okay; the world will not end.

But it is just a little less fun.

*Jim Pawlikowski is a junior mechanical engineering major*

## MAIL CALL

### Non-regs stop, pay attention to ceremony

I have a bone to pick with all non-regs who live on the Quad or those who insist on walking across the Quad at 6:40 a.m. and 6:30 p.m. You'd think that someone would catch a clue that if hundreds of CTs were formed up on the Quad at these hours then something must be going on — especially if they're saluting.

For those of you who are either new to the campus or just don't know, the American flag is raised at 6:40 a.m. and lowered at 6:30 p.m. The reason why the Corps forms up twice a day is to pay respect to the flag and our country. Even when CTs aren't in uniform we pay respect at these times by removing our cover and placing our hand over our hearts.

Is it too much to ask the non-regs do this too? That maybe they could stop and pause for a moment, and maybe even put their laundry basket down? Those who died for freedom and our country didn't do it just for the Corps of Cadets.

They fought for all those living in this free, beautiful country. I don't think it's too much to ask for passers-by to stop for 30 seconds and pay a little respect the red, white and blue that means so much more than just flying for decoration.

*K. Colacicco Class of '97*

### Corps not wrong to endorse yell leaders

This letter is in response to the letters on April 3, regarding the position of Jr. yell leader:

First of all, regarding the letter from Clayton D. McKinnis: I attended the yell leader forum of March 27, and all nine candidates for the position of Jr. yell leader appeared to be motivated, and all nine appeared that they "truly wanted the position." When he says the two winners were "coat-tailed riders," all he is wrong. He slams the Corps for not supporting one of our own, but he is slamming two of the people who will

represent our University for the next year. Whatever happened to the Aggie spirit and supporting fellow Aggies?

The Corps had significant reasons for not supporting the other cadet for Jr. yell leader. Trying to explain this from a Corps member's perspective, as much as I would like to, is much like trying to explain the Aggie spirit to a non-Aggie: "From the inside looking out, you can't explain it, and from the outside looking in, you can't understand it."

*David Hilburn Class of '97*

### Americans owe debt of gratitude, not guilt

I would like to comment on D.J. Harris's letter on April 3, "Think about the history of injustice in America."

Harris believes that America owes a great debt to the people who were driven out, killed, enslaved or victimized in the building of this country.

He says this country was built by the labor of the oppressed, and that those who benefit from that oppression have neglected to acknowledge and repay that debt.

I agree with Harris that we owe a great debt to America's builders. However, if the oppressed built America, then those in power directed and guided that building, and surely we owe them as well. What I'm saying is that we all owe a debt to all those who came before us, but it is a debt of gratitude, not one of money and guilt. It can never be repaid.

I believe what Harris means is that those who today benefit from the oppression of the past are guilty, and those who suffer because of it are somehow ennobled. This is wrong.

Change comes very slowly. The social conditions prevalent today were forged long before. The descendants of one group don't owe anything to the descendants of another simply by virtue of blood ties.

Those who try to make the fortunate — read whites — apologize for their good fortune only encourage disunity and mistrust.

They seek to categorize us into the innocent and the guilty. We owe them. We are the oppressors, they are victims. Such false rhetoric only serves to turn us against each other. The sins of the past must be forgiven if we are to achieve lasting social harmony.

*Mark A. Smith Class of '94*

### Big Event Committee gives thanks to students

On behalf of the 58-member Big Event Committee, we'd like to thank each and every Ag who came out Saturday morning to participate in Big Event '95.

Letters and calls have been pouring into the student government office telling us how much residents of B-CS appreciate the time and effort you all put in to lending the community a hand.

As students, it would be easy for us to get wrapped-up in the day-to-day campus grind and forget that there is a real world out there with real people and real need.

In many college towns, the residents see students as a source of traffic, long lines, loud neighborhoods and full bars.

Our goal in Big Event is to thank those residents and enable them to share in the Aggie Spirit that they may never see at Fish Camp, Kyle field or Muster.

Many organizations worked late into the day, completing jobs large for twice their number of participants.

We would especially like to thank those groups who went above and beyond what was originally asked of them and those eager and willing to take on other jobs when they finished theirs early.

Several groups are still completing projects throughout the end of the semester. You are truly showing B-CS what it is to be an Aggie.

It's impossible for all of you to know how much you are appreciated as I look through the stacks of Thank You's coming in, I'm overwhelmed.

You have accomplished the mission of Big Event—parts of the community that know nothing of our great traditions and football team love Aggies anyway! Thank you for all of your hard work. Hope we see you out again next year!

*Bo Garcia The Big Event Committee '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, clarity and accuracy. Letters may be submitted in person at 013 Reed McDonald. A valid student I.D. is required. Letters may also be mailed to: The Battalion - Mail Call Fax: (409) 845-2647 013 Reed McDonald E-mail: Batt@tamvm1.tamu.edu Texas A&M University Batt@tamvm1.tamu.edu College Station, TX 77843-1111

