

Adios A&M Words of wisdom on school, life and fun

MARK SMITH

EDITOR IN CHIEF



Since the age of eight I've wanted to be an Aggie. My father was an old Ag and something about Texas A&M just seemed to call to me, a voice in my head.

"Mark, Mark, come to A&M," the voice said. "We have cheap beer and beautiful women."

The great education just sealed the deal. In the Fall of 1990 I arrived. My time in college has been memorable, and I sometimes think back to those early days when I was freshman.

"Hey, Erin what the heck is Silver Taps, anyway?" I would ask. "Is it that a new dance troupe?"

Erin, rolling eyes, "Stupid freshmen." I've spent five years here and in those five years I've done a lot of things. Bonfire, The Battalion, Intramurals.

I've grown as a person and learned a lot about myself and the Simpsons (not O.J.).

But, I've also spent five years not doing anything — or so it seems. I look back and think, "I really wish I'd taken the time to do that?"

There are a number of great organizations here that work to improve the campus, life and the community. I look at what these people do during functions like the Big Event and say to myself, "Mark, you are a lazy S.O.B."

I hate to think about how life would be if I didn't commit myself to an organization like The Battalion. I wouldn't have any marketable job skills and I would definitely not have gotten the job I did.

A&M is big on the "other education" — those outside activities that put into practice the theories presented in the classroom — and there are a number of groups on campus that can give you a good experience working with people.

But, college isn't all about school and organizations. It's about growth and responsibility and learning to deal with people. What's the best way to learn about responsibility — being irresponsible. The best way to know not to do something is to do it. Then you have first hand experience. Hangovers are a prime example of this.

After graduation, you have to be able to look back at your college days and say, "What was I thinking? I'll never do something that stupid again."

My advice to all of you who remain here in Aggieland is to do as much as you can while you can. I spent too many days vegetating in front of the TV — which is why I am so familiar with weird cartoon characters. D'oh! There was so much more that I could have done but lacked the initiative to do it.

Remember — sleep is something that should be reserved for the grave.

Here are some things that you should, nay must, do before graduation. Stay up all night talking with your friends about life, the universe and everything.

Go on a road trip to no place in particular for no good reason what-so-ever. Rent a movie the night before a test, just to say that you did it.

Cow tipping. Enough said. Explore the crevices of the O&M building. There is a certain, unusual acoustical effect.

Of course, there are several things you should try to avoid.

Do not ever play truth or dare with people you work with — and absolutely do not take a dare.

Showing people your old prom picture — or your ID for that matter — is usually a bad idea. It could give you no end of grief.

Tell people at a party that you can drink anyone under the table.

Several times in the past couple of weeks, people have asked me if I'm going to miss college. My answer was quick and simple — yes and no.

College has been a special time in my life, as it is for everyone who attends. I've made friendships that I hope to have forever. I've had mentors and romantic interests (no, seriously). I've lived, and I've grown up.

But there is a lot about college that I won't miss: homework, tests, biology, research papers, tests. (You said tests twice.) I hate tests.

The real world does have some advantages. None of those dreaded things will wear their ugly heads. The pay is better, and the hours are better.

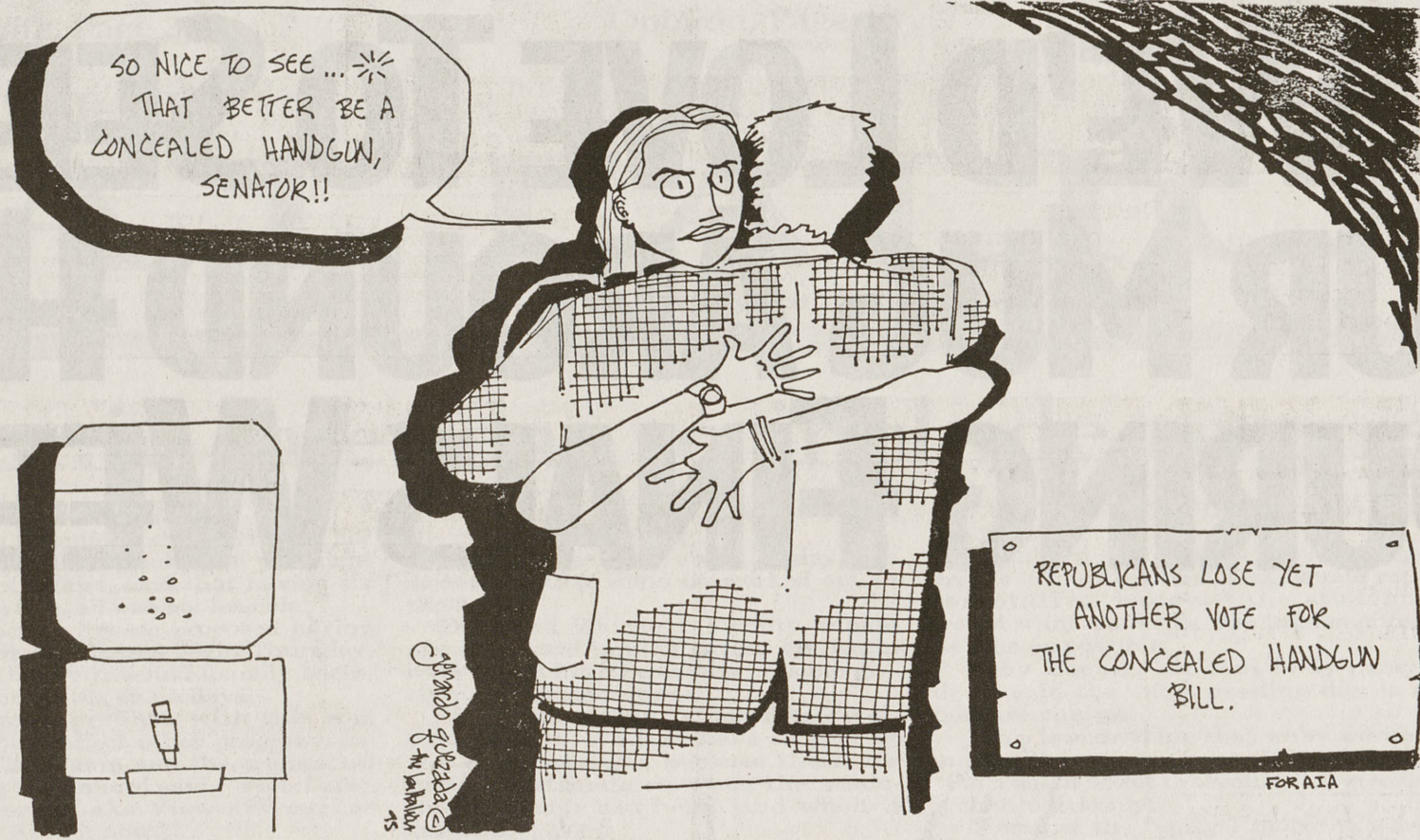
This is a normal transition, I guess. Learn from my triumphs (Ha!) and mistakes (That's more like it).

I'm outta here Aggieland. As a noted humanitarian once said:

"Excellent. Everything is falling into place."

— C. Montgomery Burns, Springfield Nuclear Power Plant Owner

Mark Smith is a senior journalism major



President has credibility problem

Our president has a credibility problem. For some reason, a number of people seem to think that President Clinton just doesn't figure into anything happening these days.

Both houses of Congress pretty much do what they want and then tell the president about it later. For example, remember that sweeping baseball-reform legislation the president tried to send through a few months back? Yeah, so do I.

But Bill Clinton is relevant, just ask him. Fortunately, someone did — at a news conference that only one network even bothered to carry. So Clinton said, "The president is relevant."

Oh ... I was just wondering. This reminds me of a line from Hamlet that I had to memorize in high school. To paraphrase — "Me-thinks he doth protest too much."

Actually, for a while there, I was almost impressed with Clinton.

After the Oklahoma City bombing, for the briefest of moments, Bill Clinton acted, well ... presidential. For a day or two, I was worried that I might have to revise my opinion.

Clinton demonstrated genuine concern for the victims and an unhesitating willingness to support the local authorities in whatever way necessary. Leadership — what a concept.

Of course, the real Bill Clinton was bound to show his face eventually. Instead of simply focusing on catching the bad guys, Clinton found it necessary to point fingers.

On April 24, Clinton blasted those he called the "purveyors of hate," who fill the airwaves. He rambled on, "They spread hate, they leave the impression

DAVID TAYLOR

COLUMNIST



that, by their very words, violence is acceptable." Yep, Bill is back and is better than ever.

In one fell swoop, our president has determined that each and every one of us who has ever listened to a conservative talk radio

host is prone to blow-up random federal buildings. In the immortal words of Richard Dawson, "Good answer, good answer (clap here). Is it up there?"

All week long I have searched for some explanation for my inability to get focused for Finals Week. At last, now I understand that my deep-seated longing for pyrotechnics interferes with my thought processes. I am sure that if only I could spend my time listening to the "purveyors of love" in Washington I would long to plant daffodils and eat Caesar Salad all the days of my life.

Or, on the other hand, we could return to reality.

I cannot claim to support every utterance of Rush Limbaugh, but he does not have an audience of 20 million people because his listeners wish to submit themselves to mind control. Rush Limbaugh simply says what many people already believe. If Bill Clinton spent a little more time listening to the people of this country and a little less time insulting their intelligence, maybe 20 million people would listen to him, too. Well, maybe not.

Anyone who has ever heard Rush Limbaugh on the radio — and most of his critics probably haven't — knows there is absolutely no credence to the idea that he, or most other conservative commentators for that matter, encourage, condone or even feel anything except sincere remorse and empathy for the victims of the Oklahoma

City bombing. It should be obvious that a belief in less government is not the same as the desire to destroy government. Questioning the bounds of executive agency power — be it in the ATF, the FBI or the IRS — does not mean that the employees of these agencies should be targets of madmen. In fact, the very foundation of conservative ideals rests on a respect for the law and the Constitution on which the law is based. Murder must be punished.

Disagreeing with Bill Clinton's policies, however, is not murder, nor is it against the law.

The last time I checked, the disagreement with flawed policies is not only a good idea, but the responsibility of an informed electorate. I seem to recall a certain man who managed to get himself elected to the Office of President who spent quite a bit of time disagreeing with government policies while in his youth.

President Clinton may well have indicted himself with his ramblings.

After all, according to his own logic, if these conservatives are responsible for the federal building bombings in Oklahoma City, isn't Clinton responsible for the bombings and destruction of both life and property that occurred back in the '60s due to the pervading sense of rebellion fostered by liberal protests? Sounds pretty ridiculous, doesn't it? No, just incredible-Bill.

Yep, the president is still relevant. Heck, if Bill Clinton weren't around, we would probably have to spend our time debating real issues and solving actual problems.

How boring.

David Taylor is a senior management major

THINK TWICE Decision about sex personal, weighty

ELIZABETH PRESTON

COLUMNIST



Sex is an endlessly discussed topic in American society. If it isn't being explicitly shown on television, talked about on radio shows or written about in magazines such as Cosmopolitan and Gentleman's Quarterly, then it is being constantly brought up among friends.

Newsweek even had a recent cover story on the resurrection of virginity as a popular choice among teens, but statistics abound about the "frightening" rise in sexuality among the younger generation.

It is true that teen pregnancy, promiscuity and abortion rates are raising at shocking speeds, and also true that something needs to be done to help children and teens who turn to sex because they are not getting love from their parents and family.

However, the average Aggie does not fit into these categories. A few had some wild teenage years and some are still using sex as a substitute for parental affection, but the majority are just trying to successfully navigate the scary years of raging hormones between 16 and marriage.

The messages about sex are both constant and confusing. Churches and religious leaders preach to us that sex without the sanctity of marriage is not only wrong, but in defiance of God. This is a pretty halting threat to many. Open defiance of God is a scary proposition for many who believe strongly.

This guilt often serves a useful purpose. Many teens who would have raced into something they would have regretted later stopped because of the weight of a lifetime of guilt they had been taught.

Parents often seem to act as if they have never even thought about sex, much less had it. This is good some of the time, because the mere thought of parental sex is enough to turn the strongest person's stomach. It is also negative because they teach their children that sex is not only unmentionable, but something to be ashamed of.

Parents — at least some of the ones in my experience — tend to treat sex as an enormous sin.

Instead of teaching their children about how to make safe, healthy and happy choices, they simply preach "Don't even think about it."

This is fine until we all turn 16 and the hormones hit.

Then our bodies begin arguing with everything we have been taught up to this point.

This is when we need the talks, the openness and the experience of our parents. This is when we need friends who can share their feelings and their frustrations.

This is when we need the strong moral base that has hopefully been pounded into our heads for years.

One of the most important decisions of your life is when to have sex. It is between you and your partner only, yet the actions of those around you during your entire life are the foundations of your decision making.

Ultimately, only one thing matters, and that is how you feel in your heart.

The choice to have sex has everything to do with guilt, emotions, lust, religion and morals, but the single most important thing is to be at peace with whatever road is chosen.

Sexual experience has such a stigma in American society. If someone chooses to have sex without marriage then they are — depending on who is speaking — cool, neat, promiscuous, loose, easy, a slut or a free spirit.

Virgins are stereotyped to be better, religious, frigid, boring or unwilling to just "let go."

In truth, none of these stereotypes matter. Virgin or sexually active individual, all you have to worry about is what you, your partner and your God — if you believe — feel toward your actions. No one else should have any say in this personal decision, though the advice of those close to you should be considered.

The decision of when to have sex should not be taken lightly.

It is a frighteningly large decision, and the possible consequences are enormous.

However, if sex is decided upon, birth control, consequences and emotions should all be considered. If sex is not something the person is ready for, they should not be afraid to make this very clear about this decision to their partner.

If a person's heart is truly at peace with their decision about their own sexuality, then the heartbreak associated with sexuality will be greatly lessened.

Elizabeth Preston is a junior English major



Hostility to minorities doesn't fit with ideals

April 28 was a sad day at Olsen Field, but not because the Ags lost. What coach who fails to send someone to warm up when the starting pitcher gives up seven runs in the first two innings deserves to win?

It was a sad day because every time the only African-American player on the UT team came to bat, the corporate cheer coming from the student section was "one-Fat Albert, two-Fat Albert ..." eventually preceded or followed by "hey, hey, hey ..."

I was at first puzzled by this; the player was neither fat nor did his name resemble "fat" or "Albert."

I asked the baseball fan nearby if the reference might be some historical baseball character or event.

And then from behind me I hear, "Get that nigger out of here ..."

How ironic that the Aggie parent I was seated by had told me minutes earlier that his daughter came to A&M because everyone is so friendly.

All the "yes ma'ams" and "no ma'ams" in the world cannot excuse the racist chants heard on Olsen Field last Friday.

Whether such behavior is motivated by ignorance or hatred is irrelevant. For whatever the motivation, the message is that Texas A&M is hostile — certainly not friendly — to minorities.

It's not exactly the kind of reputation most respected universities have.

Jan E. Leighley Political Science Professor

Republicans believe in great American dream

My bleeding heart cries out to Jason Carr. This is not a perfect world. Government can't provide everything for everybody and never ever run out of money. Facing escalating deficits and a seemingly insurmountable national debt, government can't afford to pacify every whiny interest group with tax money. Government isn't a huge bottomless trust fund, and the Republicans understand that spending cuts must be made.

Carr talks about a Democratic president who cut the deficit. Maybe there's a Democratic president we don't know about — certainly not the one who financed the debt with short-term loans while claiming that his spending cuts brought about recovery.

Also, just like the orphanage idea doesn't represent all Republicans, I will happily note that all Democrats don't resort to name-calling and make ignorant one-sided judgments like Carr. If he had taken the time to carefully read Percival's column, he would've discovered that Republicans stand for less government, personal responsibility and responsible spending. The voters last November understood that.

Eva Darski Class of '98

I was very disappointed with the letter written by Jason Carr in The Battalion on May 2 in which he trashed both the College Republicans and their president, Lydia Percival.

Carr makes it seem as if Republicans advocate jailing large numbers of citizens at random, but this is simply not the case. Believe it or not, however, most

Republicans believe in holding people accountable for their actions and that if they break the law, they should pay the price.

Quite a novel idea, huh? People in this country are granted equal opportunity, but once they break the law, they should be punished as the law stipulates.

Also, he mentions the Republicans' "hypocritical" notions of wanting to downsize government, while at the same time wanting to increase the size of the police force on the streets.

With many people having to think twice about venturing out into the streets, an increase in the police force will both create jobs and be a positive step toward making our streets safer.

The Republicans more than compensate for this proposal of increasing the police force by supporting bills that cutback on other failing programs, such as welfare.

"But wait," liberals will exclaim. "That's just another example of stereotypical, upper-class Republicans trying to take money away from the poor."

Well, allow me to retort. The poor do not need to be handed money from the government. They need to become self-reliant and escape the liberal-induced mindset of willingly accepting government handouts instead of working and striving with some pride.

This, fellow Ags, is what I, as well as other Republicans, stand for.

James Barricklow Class of '98

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:

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