

As I lay graduating ...



ERIN HILL
ASST. OPINION EDITOR

Five years ago, I graduated from high school and headed to Idaho to attend college. My entire life, up to that point had been lived in states that either bordered Canada or else bordered states that bordered Canada. Never in my wildest yankee dreams had I planned to live in Texas. Never in my wildest yankee dreams had I planned to even visit Texas.

To be honest, I hadn't planned to come closer than I had to.

Places like Houston and San Antonio were just words I read in newspapers; Dallas, of course, was the location of that goofy TV show and Austin was a name I memorized in the sixth grade in the "Capitols of our states" unit.

I didn't even know Texas A&M University existed until a month before I applied. That still shocks some people — folks who are convinced that A&M's name is sung from the hilltops everywhere. Maybe it should be, maybe it shouldn't be, but certainly no one sung it 'round my neighborhood.

Fightin' Texas Aggie what? Spring nights in Idaho in the semester preceding my transfer to A&M were spent walking with my boyfriend, a Houstonian, learning the War Hymn, various yells and the art of 'humping it.'

Sure, it was frightening to think of moving to a place that "humped it," but nonetheless I was thrilled at the prospects of the Lone Star state. It seemed an adventure.

It was good to have few expectations or preconceptions of A&M as baggage when I arrived. No old A&M in my family tried to 'convince' me to choose Aggie land. No older siblings had paved the way.

No one I knew knew a thing about this pocket of the world. It was just a place on a map until I came and saw and drove up that imposing corridor that connects Texas Ave. and the Systems administration building.

"What are you doing?" my friends cried when I first made plans to come to Texas. Who just packs up and heads south?

"There goes Erin on some half-baked dream. She'll be back though, sure of it," they figured. Some were sure I would return, and at first, I was pretty sure too. Despite my lack of baggage, A&M was different than anything I had expected.

Almost too much for a scared yankee. It was culture shock, dramatic and painful, when I stepped off the plane. The y'all took some getting used to, but I quickly picked up that useful contraction.

The southern demonstrativeness was new, however; northerners, especially in the Great Lakes area, are a stocic, strong, pioneer stock bunch. We just don't walk around saying "Howdy."

And the weather. My parents had to send money to revamp my wardrobe shortly after I moved here.

I owned just a few short sleeve shirts, enough to make it through a Minnesota summer, but nowhere near enough to make it through even the first week of April in Texas.

I was underprepared in more ways than one. Texas was like a whole different country, just as the ad says. More like a different planet actually. I didn't see how I fit in at first either.

The initial uncertainty, however, and the confusion made it all the more sweet when I realized that I belonged at A&M. Gradually I grew to love being a 'tourist' in the Republic of Texas.

I slowly but surely acclimated to this crazy place, emotionally, physically, mentally and everything else.

It was after my first year here, during the summer after I decided not to return, that I started waxing nostalgic over Aggie land. Started yearning for the sound of whoops and the sight of cadets. It had rubbed off.

I wanted to say "Howdy." I wanted to gig 'em.

Getting my Aggie ring ... what did it mean? Not that I had finally received my 95 hours — because I had enough hours to get a ring for a year before I placed my order — but that I had committed to a school. I had decided to stay. I had realized that this place was my home. I had chosen it as such.

I was an Aggie. Football seasons. Crying over our loss to Oklahoma in 1993, and marveling that I cared so much. My first encounter with Reveille, and all of our subsequent meetings. Ring dance.

Writing for The Batt. Hanging out at the Zip'n across from campus. The Big Event. The big moving event. The big long distance bill event. The big all-nighter event. The big road trip to LSU event. The big senioritis event.

The big undergraduate event. All of that over now.

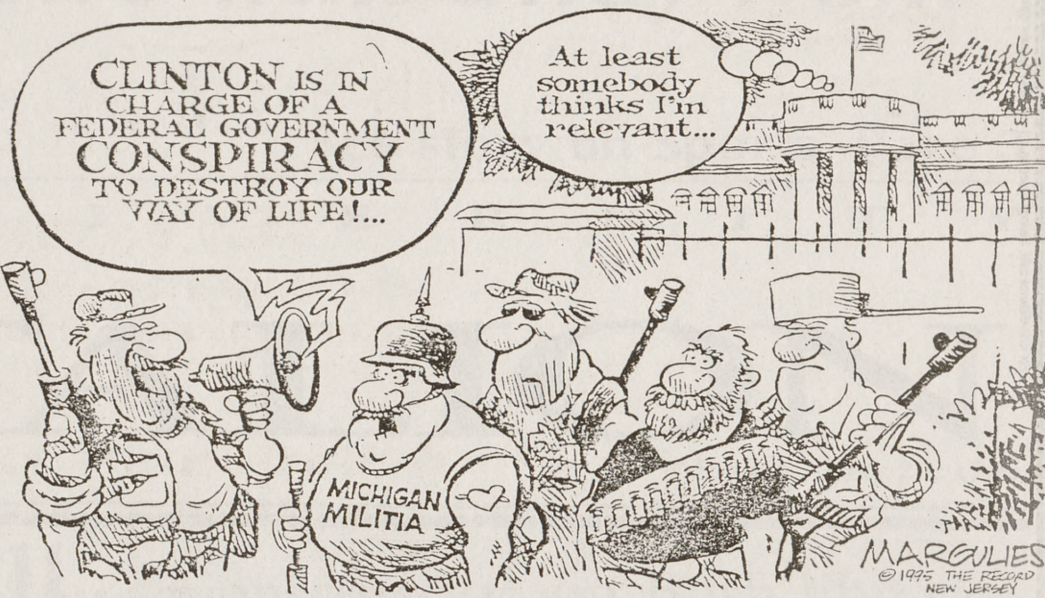
But wait. I just arrived, it seems. Is it really me, this person with a degree just inches from her hand? Is this me, the one who will be somebody's English teacher in a semester?

I'm not ready, not yet. Yeah, I know, but five years just doesn't seem enough. We all say it, but it isn't any less true. Leaving isn't easy. (Making it through the graduation snooze fest isn't easy either, just for the record.)

And then come the goodbyes. The tears, the bittersweet smile and the leap from the safety of undergraduate life into something bigger, but maybe not so different.

With a longing gaze backward, I hold my breath and step off into the unknown.

Erin Hill is a senior English major



Teachers, students should make final week productive



JIM PAWLIKOWSKI
COLUMNIST

The administration can help us by strictly enforcing the original intent of dead week.

No tests should be given. No homework, papers, presentations or projects — with the exception of assignments that replace scheduled final exams — should be due.

Of course, we can help ourselves by planning ahead and managing our time to avoid those 2-hour-a-night naps.

One solution that has been proposed is an extended reading period. Our reading day represents the shortest dead time of any university in the nation.

However, a longer reading period would not solve our problems. At least in my case, a few days completely free would result in a few days of sleeping late and unproductive efforts at studying.

The current system of half a week of class, one reading day, one day of finals, the weekend then three more days of exams is a good system that works — provided that no that no tests or papers are due during that same period.

The final three days of class should be devoted entirely to review. No new material which we are responsible for on the final should be presented.

This way, we would not have to scramble to cram new material in a couple of days in addition to reviewing material from the beginning of the semester for those dreaded comprehensive exams.

If professors do not observe dead week, and the administration does not enforce dead week regulations, then perhaps a longer reading period is the best solution.

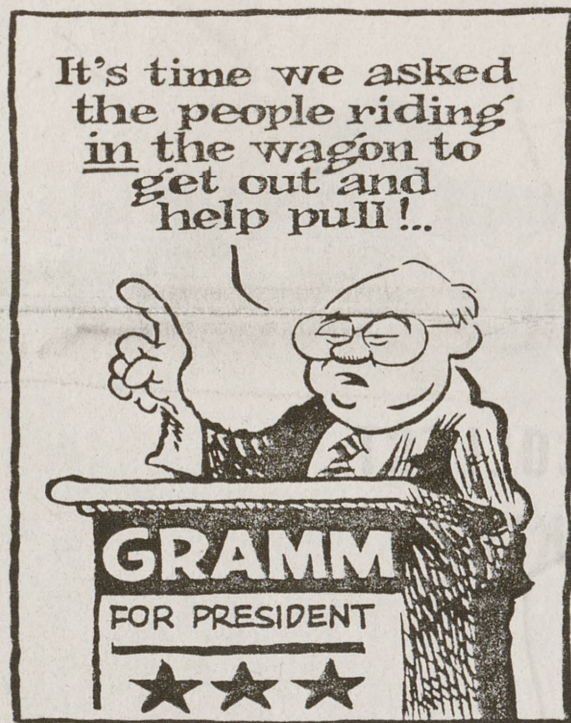
However, a few class days of review and a short reading period of no more than one or two days would better serve the needs of the students.

The University has no responsibility to make it easier on us. Professors make the rules, and we must follow them. Following the above guidelines, however, represents a mutually beneficial situation for both teachers and students.

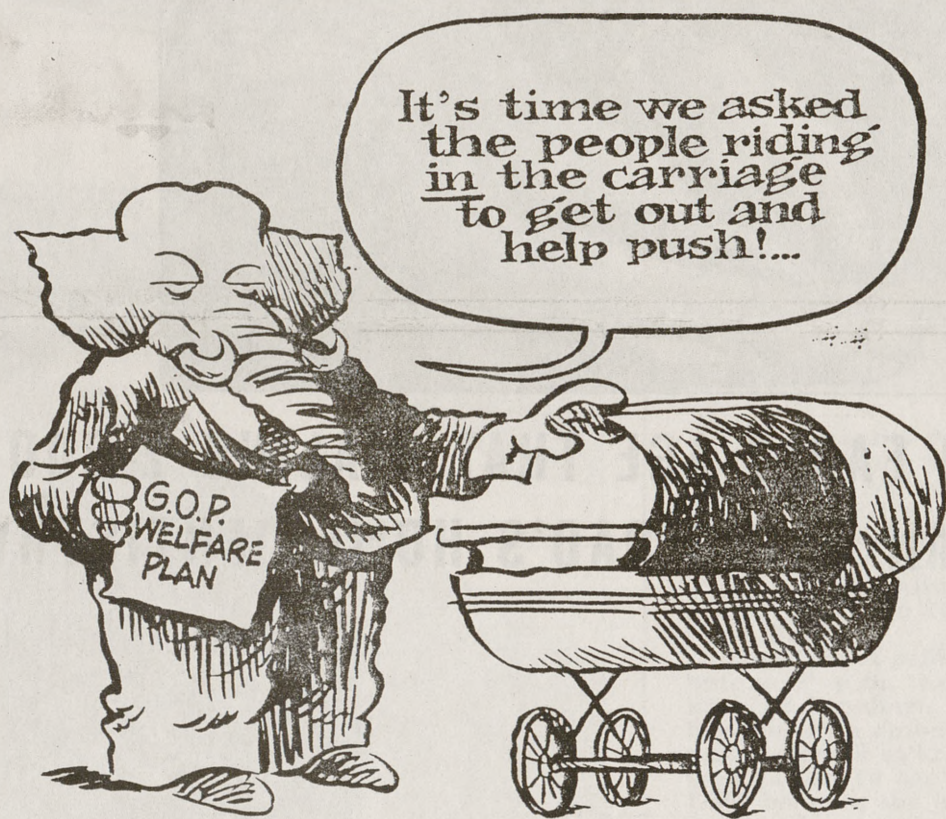
Students have more time to study; teachers have more time to grade.

And we should all get a little more sleep.

Jim Pawlikowski is a junior chemical engineering major



MARGULIES
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NEW JERSEY



MAIL CALL

Aggie Bucks not the only medium of A&M currency

In response to many letters, articles and commotion about Aggie Bucks being expanded off campus, I have a few things to point out.

Many moons ago there was a thing called money, sometimes referred to as monetary currency, or medium of exchange. Money was slowly replaced by checks and credit cards.

It is rumored that some actual Federal Reserve Notes still exist to this very day. Aggie Bucks seems to make many people believe that this is not true, that the Federal Reserve Note is no longer useful, and that moeny cannot buy things anymore.

I remember as Drew Diener did, that Texas Aggie Bookstore owner, John Raney was quoted as saying, "the only concern that the University has expressed to local businesses is that alcohol could not be purchased."

I also remember this same man saying something to the effect that students could not purchase items in his bookstore.

Have I gone absolutely mad and crazy, or can you still use cash at the Texas Aggie Bookstore, that you can still write checks at the Texas Aggie Bookstore, that you can still charge at the Texas Aggie Bookstore? I think we may have lost sight of the fact that Aggie Bucks is not the sole medium of exchange, and this does not, in any way, create a monopoly.

Not only that, but to my knowledge, the bill going through the Senate says something to the effect of: Off campus businesses may use and incorporate the Aggie Buck debit card system for purchases to be made only for items or services

that the University provides or any reasonably similar items or services. Would someone please write me and tell me where on campus you can legally purchase alcohol?

That's right, you can't. That is the real reason behind the mysterious "don't put alcohol on Aggie Bucks" thing. It doesn't just apply to alcohol. It applies to anything that the University does not sell, or anything reasonably similar.

According to the rules of Drew Diener, I should be allowed to purchase a car at Fred Brown's using my Aggie Bucks, or I should be allowed to rent a truck from UHAUL with my Aggie Bucks. I should also be allowed to buy a shotgun and ammunition with Aggie Bucks. This may all seem pretty silly, but it is no sillier than whining about not knowing how to use a Federal Reserve Note to buy anything that Aggie Bucks can't buy, and even when things that Aggie Bucks can buy.

Michael Davis
Class of '98

Too many years at A&M makes school boring

Finals are approaching, and the shadow of darkness is hovering near. To do or to die; we do not have a choice for either one — all that is left is to finish the unnamable. Yes, you know what I am talking about — finish reading that 300-page textbook (including problems sessions on each chapter), write a 50-page theme paper with full footnotes for every credit hour you are taking and learn ESP in two weeks so you can copy the test answers from the smartest kid in class telekinetically.

I am what this University made of me — a horrible, insecure mess who does not know whether to tie his shoe laces in a knot to avoid tying them again or shove the shoe laces to flow on the sides. The only bit of knowledge that I am comfortable in acknowledging that this higher education has given me that squirrels do not like blindfolds when

they are walking on a tight rope, and since hell did not freeze over when I was going into a test ill-prepared, it never will. Therefore, not counting on hell freezing over, I, like other upcoming graduates, am forced to get a real job. And I am scared more than that time a tall green dude climbed through my window while I was lying in bed and tried to bite me in the neck — but it turned out to be my girlfriend without make-up, scary, huh?

On second thought, I am looking forward to the new challenge, even after seven consecutive years at A&M — including summers — this school thing is becoming a bore.

Claude E. Wilkinson
Class of '95

Christians should be judged by their acts, not claims

This letter is written in response to David Taylor's column on April 27.

Aggies, do not be deceived. Hitler and those involved with the killings in the Holocaust were displaying their utter contempt for God by attempting to exterminate the Jewish nation — God's chosen people — from the earth and will surely feel His wrath.

A Christian, contrary to what Taylor inferred, is not someone who was raised in a Christian home or simply claims to be one.

A true Christian is one who has put their faith in Christ's blood that was shed on the cross for the forgiveness of sin and through him is a new person, living their life for the Lord.

Taylor claimed that Jews shouting "Crucify him!" might promote hostile feelings towards Jewish people.

I on the other hand, would like to suggest the opposite—that through an understanding of God's plan of salvation for man, Christians will undoubtedly learn to appreciate the actions the Jew took.

Furthermore, without the crucifixion of Jesus no blood would have been shed, and atonement

for sin would not be possible. Instead, he paid the price for our sin and was resurrected to demonstrate his love for us, and by accepting him, we have the assurance of eternal life.

Bryan Curry
Class of '97

Pride in A&M more important than semester finals, grades

As the semester finally winds down and we all start stressing about finals, I'd like to offer a few suggestions to everyone who's just ready to break:

While you're walking to class tomorrow, say "howdy" to at least three people you pass. It's one of our best traditions, and it'll make your day, and probably a few others, a little better.

Look around you. Instead of racing blindly to your next class, slow down a little and think about what a beautiful campus we have. Sit for a few minutes under the spreading boughs of the Century Tree.

Walk around to the front of the Systems Building, where the polo fields and the golf course spread out past the flags fluttering in the breeze.

Stand in the center of Simpson Drill Field and picture Cadets, both past and present, marching in Review.

Walk past Kyle Field. If you listen hard enough, you can hear the echoes of the Fightin' Texas Aggie Band and the roar of the Twelfth Man. Football season's just a few short months away A&M!

Now, take three deep breaths and relax. No matter what the outcome of your finals, remember that you are at the greatest University in the world, and you are, and always will be, a Fightin' Texas Aggie. Beat the hell outta final, A&M! Gig'Em.

Beth Brown
Class of '97