

THE BATTALION
Established in 1893

Editorial Board
Jay Robbins, Editor in Chief
Rob Clark, Managing Editor
Sterling Hayman, Opinion Editor
Kyle Littlefield, Assistant Opinion Editor

Editorials appearing in The Battalion reflect the views of the editorials board. They do not necessarily reflect the opinions of other Battalion staff members, the Texas A&M student body, regents, administration, faculty or staff.

EDITORIAL

READ ALL ABOUT IT

The Battalion seeks to provide objective coverage of Texas A&M.

With this semester The Battalion will finish its 101st year of publication. Over the past century the Batt has evolved from a monthly news and literary magazine to one of the largest daily college newspapers in the country.

With that evolution has come purpose.

The Battalion's mission is: 1) To serve its readership by providing the most accurate, relevant and timely information possible, and to do so in a professional, fair and objective manner.

2) To train students in newspaper journalism by insisting on the highest standards of work and by providing the resources and guidance needed to reach those standards.

3) To operate under the highest ethical standards at all times.

Every semester The Battalion starts over with a new staff, new leaders and new ideas, but the basic mission of the newspaper always remains the same.

The Battalion strives to

maintain diversity in coverage and sensitivity toward certain issues without sacrificing objectivity.

The Batt's success in carrying out its mission depends on two things: the dedication of its staff and the cooperation of the community it serves, which is why reader feedback and input is important.

Make sure The Battalion knows about an event you would like to see covered. Call 845-3313 or fax 845-2647 with the information — but try to let the staff know about it several days ahead of time.

People with information, questions or comments can also stop by the newsroom at 013 Reed McDonald between 10 a.m. and 10 p.m.

The Battalion's editors expect from themselves and their staffs nothing less than responsible, conscientious journalism. Reader input is crucial in helping to maintain a standard of quality which makes for an informative and responsible newspaper.

Texas steps backward with gun law

Texas has just become the 41st state to make concealed weapons legal. Collectively, this is the largest step backward America has taken since prohibition was ended.

Gov. George Bush promised during his 1994 campaign that passing this bill would be one of his top priorities. Apparently he took his campaign promises more seriously than his father did.

Various groups, such as the all-powerful National Rifle Association and its cronies, have been trying to legalize concealed weapons in Texas for the past eight years. Finally, they have been successful.

The people that were in favor of the bill have been making sad attempts to reassure worried Texans. Gib Lewis, a former house speaker, who is now — surprise, surprise — an NRA lobbyist, comförtingly predicted that only a small percentage of Texans would actually acquire gun licenses.

He used Florida as an example, citing the fact that their bill passed in 1987, and only 2 percent of their residents have actually pursued a handgun permit.

Two percent of the people walking around with concealed handguns is still too many for comfort. In addition, how can we tell if his prediction will be correct? Maybe if we all just close our eyes really tightly and hope that Lewis is right, then it will become true. And maybe there really is a Santa Claus, too.

It isn't safe to stake a life on either claim. It is also scary to try to assess which 2 percent of the population may receive licenses. Maybe those who receive licenses will be sane, rational and even-tempered people who would

never lose their heads or act without thought. Then again, maybe not.

Sure, 100-percent accuracy is impossible. So one or two crazies will slip through the cracks. All that means is that one or two people will lose their lives prematurely. This seems like a small price to pay for the privilege of carrying a killing machine ... except to the families of the victims.

The people who want to carry a gun badly enough to go through the application process — which includes paying several fees that add up to over \$200 and attending a 10- to 15-hour course on gun safety — are the people who need guns the least.

E.B. Reddoch III, executive director for the Texas State Rifle Association, told the Dallas Morning News, "I see a great opportunity for the less-than-well-trained gun owner because of the momentum to get a license. Overall we'll end up with safer streets because of it."

To summarize, his logic is that the gun laws up to this point have allowed uneducated people to have murderous weapons in their homes. So, if they are inspired to get a license to carry these previously-stored weapons, we will actually fix the problem.

Something is flawed in that logic. This means if Bubba down at the bar has one of those newfangled licenses, then Joe-Bob will damn well get one for himself. But, cleverly, while Bubba and Joe-Bob think they are competing to be the first one on the block able to carry concealed guns, the state of Texas is actually transforming them into intelligent, reasonable and educated gun carriers.

Reddoch needs to rejoin reality. The groups opposing the bill, including

notable ones such as the Texas Association of Police Chiefs and Texans Against Gun Violence, presented eloquent arguments against the bill.

Unfortunately, it wasn't enough. In an article that appeared in The Dallas Morning News on May 27, Dallas police Chief Kenneth Yarbrough said that they had police personnel who were dealing with guns in a different way — mostly defensive actions. Now they will have to be retrained to treat every situation as if weapons were involved.

Police were nervous enough when criminals were the only people carrying guns around. Now most everyone will have the ability to carry guns. A routine traffic stop could easily turn into a deadly incident.

Bruce Elfant, speaking for Texans Against Gun Violence, said the new law "leaves us open to errors in judgment, stolen weapons and crimes coming out of arguments. And I think it's unrealistic to think those things aren't going to happen somewhere, sometime."

Preventing these accidental deaths is obviously more important than somehow trying to make up for the inadequacies of previous gun laws with a newer one.

Obvious to everyone except Texas lawmakers, that is.

Maybe Lewis and Elfant are correct in their predictions. In the meantime, barricade your houses and burrow down a little lower into your safe rooms. It is easier to do this than to fear the barrel of an irate gun-carrier.

And quietly hope that it is only your security and peacefulness that are at stake.

Elizabeth Preston is a senior English major.



ELIZABETH PRESTON COLUMNIST



MAIL CALL

The Battalion encourages letters to Mail Call and will print as many as space allows.

In order to conserve space, letters must be 300 words or less in length and include the author's name, class (or city of residence) and telephone number. Telephone numbers will not be printed in The Battalion.

Letters may be submitted in person at 013 Reed McDonald Building, Texas A&M University, between 10 a.m. and 10 p.m. The person dropping off the letter must show a valid student I.D. or driver license.

Mail letters to The Battalion — Mail Call, 013 Reed McDonald Building, Texas A&M University, College Station, Texas 77843-1111.

Fax letters to (409) 845-2647. Fax letters must include a driver license or I.D. number. The Battalion e-mail address is Batt@tamvm1.tamu.edu.

E-mail letters must originate from an account belonging to the person who signs the letter and include a driver license or I.D. number.

We regret that not all letters can be published.

For queries on letters, call Sterling Hayman, The Battalion Opinion Editor at (409) 845-3312.

The Battalion reserves the right to edit all letters for length, style, clarity, accuracy, spelling and punctuation. The Battalion will not publish letters that include requests that they not be edited.

The Battalion reserves the right to not publish letters on the basis of excessive length or factual inaccuracy.

Letters which are libelous or abusive to individuals or groups in the community will be rejected.

The Battalion will not print unsigned letters, or letters which request that the author's name not be used. No more than one letter from any given individual will be published within a 30-day period.

To be considered for publication in the next day's issue of The Battalion, letters should be delivered to the Battalion office by 2 p.m.

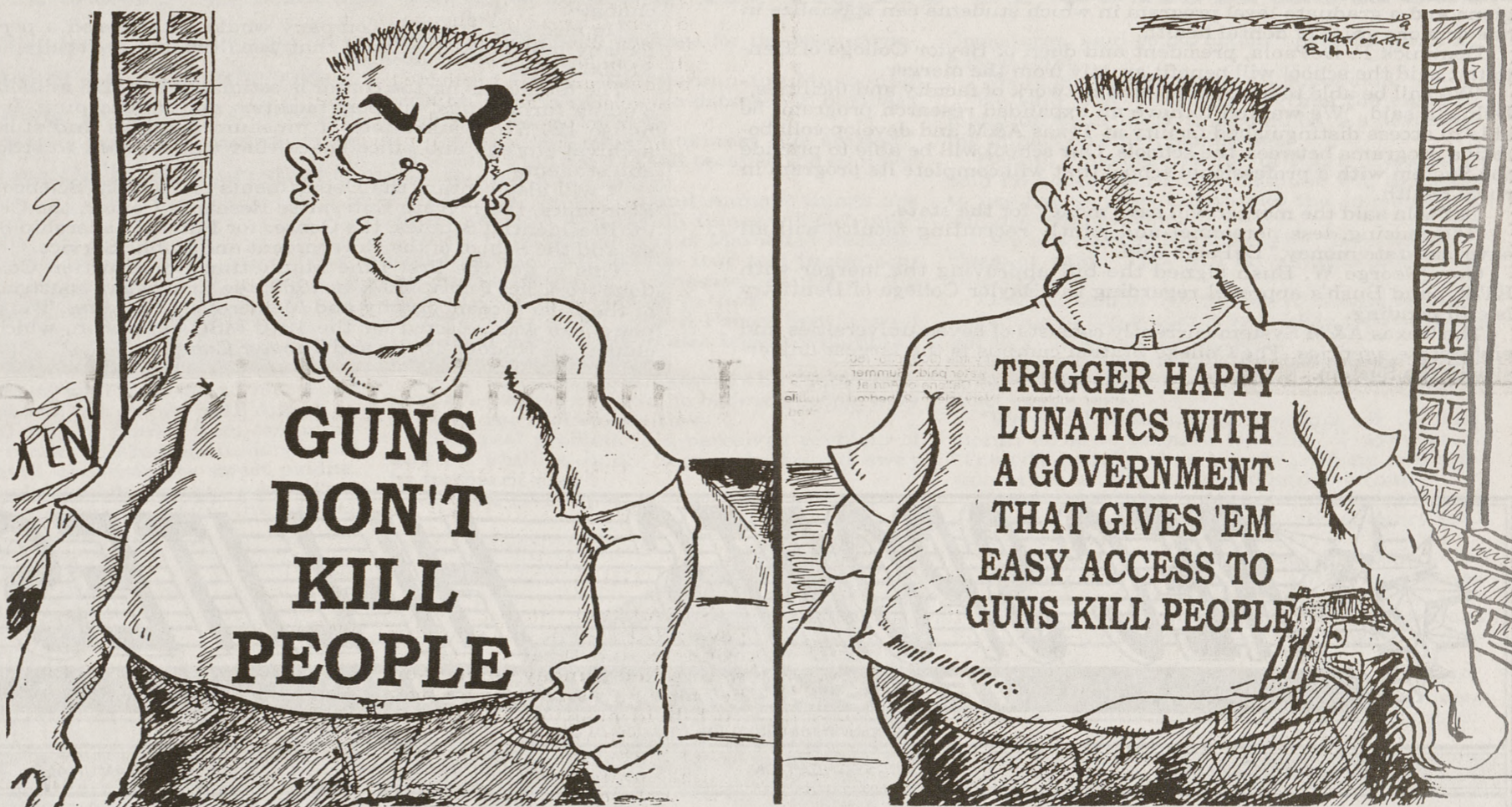
The Battalion will not publish letters soliciting witnesses to specific crimes or accidents, or other materials related to potential or pending legal proceedings.

Consumer complaints will not be published but will receive the attention of the appropriate news editors.

The Battalion will not accept letters from political candidates who have filed to run for any office, nor will it run letters from political campaigns or letters which oppose or endorse candidates. Letters discussing election issues, however, are acceptable.

Letters of appreciation, public announcements and other notices will be published on individual merit and timeliness. "Thank you" letters and lost and found notices may be published in the Classified or display advertising sections.

Jay Robbins, Summer Editor in Chief



NRA fails to represent mainstream America

Good on former president George Bush. Two weeks ago, in response to an National Rifle Association newsletter that referred to ATF federal agents as "jackbooted thugs" in "Nazi bucket helmets," Bush cancelled his membership in the NRA.

This move by the former president not only shows that the NRA continues to overstep the bounds of decency, but also that the organization does not represent mainstream America.

However, fellow Republicans, Phil Gramm and Bob Dole — two men who continue to offer their souls in return for potential votes — are quick to bow down to the NRA, which boasts a membership of over 3.5 million and a seemingly endless bank account. Gramm has received hundreds of thousands of dollars from the NRA for his presidential campaign, and Dole has promised a Senate vote on the repeal of the assault weapon ban that was passed in last year's anti-crime bill.

This last faux pas of the NRA couldn't have come at a worse time for the gun lobby. The fact that the NRA continues to spread its hateful anti-government messages in the wake of the Oklahoma City tragedy, in which many federal agents lost their lives, proves that the organization is short-sighted enough not to realize that they are the problem and not the solution to society's woes.

Clinton was correct in attacking many members of the media for spreading hateful, anti-government rhetoric. The Republicans were quick to pound Clinton, claiming that he was trampling the First Amendment; however, Clinton's message was right in line with a central Republican philosophy — personal responsibility. Clinton was merely suggesting that the radio talk show hosts take responsibility for

their actions. When hate is preached, that hate is expressed throughout society.

The NRA, too, must take responsibility for their actions. Not only are they preaching their messages of hate and anti-government, but they are spreading the messages throughout an audience that loves to use weapons. Sounds pretty dangerous, huh?

Although the organization's membership continues to increase and its power grows larger, more and more leaders are speaking out against the NRA. Retired Gen. Norman Schwarzkopf, who also resigned from the organization, noted that the NRA is "very inflexible and almost radical."

You may notice that neither Bush nor Schwarzkopf are the typical "bleeding hearts" who are always accused of attacking the gun lovers. In fact, both are fairly staunch conservatives. But, they too realize that the ideology promoted by the NRA is not conducive to a healthy society.

But, then again, neither is a repeal of the assault-weapons ban that became law last year. Yet, the gun lovers think that allowing citizens to carry semi-automatic weapons may cure what ails a society that blows up federal buildings, releases lethal gases in subway cars and sends bombs through the mail.

Yes, things will have to change. People must start taking responsibility for the consequences of their actions. Certainly, limiting the right to free speech is not the answer. The NRA should be able to say whatever they want to, just like the Ku Klux Klan and the Michigan Militia. Americans must put an end to these organizations by refusing to accept their propaganda, and by take bold and courageous actions like former President Bush.

Sterling Hayman is a senior political science major



STERLING HAYMAN OPINION EDITOR

THE BATTALION

EDITORIAL STAFF
JAY ROBBINS, EDITOR IN CHIEF
ROB CLARK, MANAGING EDITOR
STERLING HAYMAN, OPINION EDITOR
GRETCHEN PERRENOT, CITY EDITOR
JODY HOLLEY, NIGHT NEWS EDITOR
STACY STANTON, NIGHT NEWS EDITOR
MICHAEL LANDAUER, AGGIELIFE EDITOR
NICK GEORGANDIS, SPORTS EDITOR
STEW MILNE, PHOTO EDITOR

STAFF MEMBERS

CITY DESK - ASSISTANT EDITOR: Eleanor Colvin; REPORTERS: Katherine Arnold, Javier Hinojosa, Scott McMahan, Jill Saunders, Michael Simmons, Wes Swift & Tara Wilkinson
AGGIELIFE DESK - FEATURE WRITERS: Kristen Adams, Amy Collier & Libe Goad; COLUMNIST: Amy Uptmor
SPORTSWRITERS - David Winder and Lee Wright
OPINION DESK - ASSISTANT EDITOR: Kyle Littlefield; COLUMNISTS: Elizabeth Preston, Frank Stanford & David Taylor; CONTRIBUTING COLUMNISTS: Justin Barnett, Margaret Gordon, Alex Miller, Chris Stidvent & Mark

Zane; EDITORIAL WRITERS: Jason Brown & Alex Walters; EDITORIAL CARTOONISTS: Brad Graeber & George Nasr
PHOTOGRAPHERS - Mike Friend, Roger Hsieh, Nick Rodnicki & Eddy Wylie
PAGE DESIGNERS - News: Kristin DeLuca & Kristen DeRocha; SPORTS: Robin Greathouse; AGGIELIFE: Stew Milne
COPY EDITORS - Rob Clark & Sterling Hayman
GRAPHIC ARTISTS - Toon Boonyavanich & Melissa Oldham
STRIP CARTOONISTS - Valerie Myers & Quatro Oakley
OFFICE STAFF - OFFICE MANAGER: Julie Thomas; CLERKS: Wendy Crockett & Heather Harris

NEWS: The Battalion news department is managed by students at Texas A&M University in the Division of Student Publications, a unit of the Department of Journalism.
NEWSROOM HOURS: Sunday, 2 p.m. to 10 p.m. Monday - Thursday, 10 a.m. to 10 p.m. Friday 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.
NEWSROOM PHONE: 845-3313; FAX: 845-2647
E-MAIL: Batt@tamvm1.tamu.edu
THE BATTALION ONLINE: The Battalion offers photos and the day's headlines on the worldwide web. Web Site: http://28.194.30.84

ADVERTISING: Publication of advertising does not imply sponsorship or endorsement by The Battalion. For campus, local and national display advertising, call 845-2696. For classified advertising, call 845-0569. Advertising offices are in 015 Reed McDonald and office hours are 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday. Fax: 845-2678.
SUBSCRIPTIONS: A part of the Student Services Fee entitles each Texas A&M student to pick up a single copy of The Battalion. Mail subscriptions are \$20 per semester, \$40 per school year and \$50 per full year. To charge by VISA, MasterCard, Discover or American Express, call 845-2611.