Personal aspect of choice should not be forgotten

bortion is a fiery and danger-ous topic that every American seems to have an opinion on. What most people are missing, however, is a personal experience with abortion

These are three people who live with their choices on this subject on a daily basis.



"I sleep with many different women, sometimes two or three in one week. It

unknown baby than my sister."

isn't that I don't care about each of them, it is just that I crave affection and love, and sex is a safe way to get both without getting dangerously attached. If any of the women I've slept with got preg-

nant, I know that I would not be able to handle it. I always wear a condom. In addition, I insist that the women are fully aware of my feelings toward accidental pregnancies: They should be terminated. If

they don't agree to this, then I don't sleep with them. If someone I was sleeping with did get pregnant and chose not to get an abortion, I would take care of the child. However, I know that I would eventually hate the child, the mother and myself."

"I thought I loved him. We were both in high school and had been dating exclusively - I thought for over a year when we began sleeping together. I got pregnant, and I had no idea what I was go-

My parents are very religious, and they told me they would kick me out of the house if I ever got pregnant. My boyfriend was a year younger than I and was certainly not mature enough for the responsibility of a child. He wasn't even mature enough for our relationship - I found out later that he had been

cheating on me all along.

I wasn't ready either. I had dreams of my own, dreams that I could not have accomplished if I had become a mother. Even a pregnancy would have ru-ined my life. Having the child and giving it up for adoption was just not a choice with my parents feeling the way they did.

Now I am graduating from college, engaged to be married to a kind man and emotionally equipped to

All too often, abortion is only about surviving in the best way that people know how.

handle any children that come into my life. Of course I still wonder about that first baby; but at that time in my life, it was the only choice I had."

Somewhere in all of the drama surrounding abortion - the Supreme Court decisions limiting or extending abortion, the fights among family members, the people screaming for and wailing against abortion - the people involved in the cri-

In reality, abortion is rarely about what is right and wrong, or the larger picture of humanity or even the absolute certainties that bumper stickers declare - "Women must have a choice," "Get your laws off of my body," "Abortion is murder," "Hundreds of babies are murdered every minute.'

All too often, abortion is only about surviving in

the best way that people know how.

It is about recognizing personal shortcomings and

understanding how best to deal with them.

It is about harsh reality and sad truths.

Until the world is a perfect place, abortions serve in the only way they can. They protect the unwelcoming and unready par-

ents from a life of hatred and bitterness, and they protect the unborn child from a life of tragedy and anger. However strongly we may feel about abortion, un-til we have been faced with an unexpected pregnancy, it is impossible to say how we would act or what we would feel.

Arguments, statistics, debate and protest all serve a vital purpose

However, none of them can adequately express how the people actually involved with abortion feel, and none of them help solve those people's problems.

We should all think before judging. Someday it could be you or me walking in their shoes.

Elizabeth Preston is a senior

THE BATTALION

"My sister is a person who can't deal with herself,

much less cope responsibly with any of her personal

relationships. When she found out she was pregnant

a few years ago, she wasn't even sure who the father

She was drinking regularly and using drugs. She couldn't have coped with a pregnancy – much less a

Sometimes I can't stop myself from looking around at young children and wondering what

my niece would have been like, what she would

have giggled at and what would have made her

recognize that my sister could not have emotion

physically. A full-term pregnancy might have sent r over the edge permanently.

Despite my sadness, I would rather have lost the

She is so crippled already – both spiritually and

cry. But in spite of the sadness in my heart, I

ally survived without an abortion.

Established in 1893

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EDITORIAL

FALLING FIGURES

The University should place more emphasis on academics, not athletics.

When the U.S. government approved the Morrill Act that created Texas A&M University and other land-grant colleges and universities, the idea was to provide inexpensive, quality education as well as industrializing and reconstructing the South. NCAA-sanctioned sports and college football had no part in the equation. Yet, today it seems like the prospect of a winning football team may out-weigh the ready availability of an education.

At Texas A&M, students who qualify can get scholarships to help with their educational costs, and that qualification can come in different arenas.

A student who scores well the SAT or maintains a good grades can get financial assistance easily. A student who weighs 275

pounds and can run 40 yards in five seconds is also a candidate for a price break. The problem begins when most of the students who are receiving athletic scholarships do

not graduate. The current graduation rate for scholarship athletes is 47%, compared to 67% of non-athletes. At the University of Texas, the rate is 49% and 62% respectively. A&M's graduation

But there must be m tion in these spirit ever more focus on education.

rate of athletes is down 6% from last year, though this year's class was larger. This year the University budgeted \$1.8 million for athletic scholarships and will budget \$1.9 million next year. Less than half of these scholarship athletes graduate, so by this figure \$900,000 sifts through the cracks each year, paying for uncompleted

The University pays for a large part of these students' degrees, but many do not work to finish them.

educations.

Not all athletes fail to graduate because they fail classes or do not meet requirements; some forgo their college education for professional sports, and in reality that temptation must be hard to overcome. Those students who go pro and return to finish school deserve a pat on the back for remembering the importance of education.

Are sports more important than the degree? If not, why is the entrance requirement for scholarship athletes lower than for other students? The traditions surrounding A&M athletics are grand and proud, and they should be.

But there must be moderation in these spirit events and

Should flag burning be legal? MARK

he conservatives are wasting time and tax dollars again. In late March, a group of senators and members of Congress attended a news conference in Washington, D.C. to reintroduce a proposal to amend the Constitution to protect the American

flag from desecration. That's right folks. The same allimportant flag burning debate that ended five years ago has returned. Thanks to a Democratic senator from Alabama, Howell Heflin, and a Republican senator from Utah, Orrin G. Hatch, the Senate will once again engage in debate about whether or not American citizens should have the right to desecrate the "stars and stripes.

A similar amendment was introduced in the House of Representatives by New York Congressman Gerald B.H. Solomon and Mississippi Congressman G.V. (Sonny)

It's bad enough that our legislature wasted time debating this foolish issue in 1990, but does it have to make a mockery of itself again?

Congress has a need to address important issues such as balancing the budget, reducing crime, increasing equality and lowering unemployment. Bringing up an antiflag burning amendment only servative representatives put on

With the current wave of Americans hopping on the conservative bandwagon and the 1996 elections just around the corner, it should not be surprising that this amendment was reintroduced now. This proposal will probably not be debated until the early part of next year when lawmakers might feel more pressure from voting blocs, like veterans' groups, to support it.

Luckily, President Clinton is against to the proposed amendment, and he stated last week that he would not support a proposal that opposed the First Amendment.

We must ask ourselves whether our legislators really care about this amendment, or if it is just a political ploy to gain votes.

If this proposal eventually becomes an amendment to the Constitution, it will be an infringement on our First Amendment rights. The U.S. Supreme Court determined in 1990 that burning a flag was a form of free speech that is protected by the Constitution. Have our rights of expression

changed in the last five years? People have the right to do whatever they want with their property. If I purchase a flag, I have the right to burn it, blow my nose or wipe my butt with it. In a recent New York Times arZANE

COLUMNISTS

JUSTIN BARNETT

ticle, Bob Kerrey, a Nebraska senator who won the Medal of Honor in Vietnam stated, "The fabric of America is not threatened by flag burners." To think, such blasphemy from a war veteran.

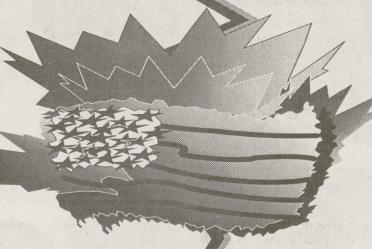
Unfortunately, the Senate already has 43 co-sponsors free speech. for the proposal, with only 23 more needed for the amendment to be ratified. The House needs only 43 more sponsors to ratify it.

If such symbolic, frivolous issues are so important. why don't we just for-

ne of the most ludihanded down by the hallowed Supreme Court in the last 10 years is the one which held that burning the American flag is a form of protected

This sort of judicial abuse is becoming more evident as the mood of the nation shifts toward conservatism, and liberals now can find sympathy only

with a few old die-hard radical jurists. These "last action liberals," as Errol Smith, columnist for National Minority Politics, has labeled them, have no respect for the ideals



get about poverty, the budget deficit and all other social ills the country is currently facing.

Instead, we can engage in heated debates over prayer in public schools, if men should remove their hats indoors, whether chewing gum should be allowed in public buildings or if President Clinton spends

too much money for hair cuts Idle nonsense is what made this country great. Our legislature is keeping this tradition

Mark Zane is a sociology graduate student

that are at the heart of American society.
The fact that the flag

is one of the most visible symbols of our country has become irrelevant to many in the often noisy "civil rights at any cost" clique. This whole sorry business came about because some

neo-beatnik from Dallas got his feelings hurt when authorities informed him that a public burning of the flag was an inappropriate method of self-expression. How this ever became an issue of

speech is bewildering. The clown was performing an action, not delivering an oration.

Not surprisingly, the aggrieved party found a willing civil rights attorney to plead his case, which eventually found its way to the Supreme Court. The rest is another shameful chapter in American

Thankfully, some members of Congress have seen fit to challenge this affront to American sensibilities. It is noteworthy that these members are both Democrats and Republicans. They could not have found a better issue to agree upon.

In these times when unity seems to be the goal of so many, why allow a symbol of unity like the flag to be publicly destroyed? What does it accomplish? If one angry soul believes it is his constitutional right to burn a flag then another angry soul may feel infringed upon if he is not allowed to urinate on the White House lawn. The line must be drawn. It might as

well begin with protecting the flag. Unfortunately, the courts are topheavy with bleeding hearts. Anyone with an ax to grind with America can easily find an "unbiased" judge to hear their pleas of persecution.

Sadly, our court system has become flooded with trivial "civil rights" lawsuits designed only to advance personal or political agendas.

Flag burning is such an agenda. It is not worth the time and money to court of law. Our courts should be reserved for important matters of law. Allowing judges judicial review has become the equivalent to giving convicts the keys to the slammer.

If we allow the flag to become nothing more than the object of some homegrown fanatic's anger, then we completely denude it of all meaning.

The notion that the flag is not worthy of constitutional protection seems to be the prevailing sentiment among a great many of the self-ordained elites. The very idea of putting certain restraints on individual action leads to accusations of censorship and persecution. Liberals suffer under the illusion that there is life without limits.

The philosophers tell us the flag is only a piece of cloth. The sociologists worry that we are not focusing on issues of "real" importance. When are these people going to get "real" jobs and stop worrying that civilization is crumbling?

The debate has been framed as one in which freedom of speech is at issue. The issue should be the protection and preservation of the symbols of our history and heritage. These are the things which endure and provide us with an identity.

We owe them a small measure of respect and honor.

Protect the flag and desecrate all the lawyers.

> Justin Barnett is a senior English major

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News: The Battalion news department is managed by stu-dents at Texas A&M University in the Division of Student Publications, a unit of the Department of lournalism. News offices are in 013 Reed McDonald Building

The Battalion (USPS 045-360) is published daily, Monday through Friday during the fall and spring semesters and Monday through Thursday during the summer sessions (except University holidays and exam periods), at Texas A&M University. Second class postage paid at College Station, TX 77840.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to The Battalion, 230 Reed McDonald Building, Texas A&M University, College Station, TX 77843.



Diving program was beneficial

My blood runs true Aggie maroon, and I believe in and support all traditions and programs that make up the Texas A&M University System.

I recently attended the last Texas A&M scuba diving class. I acquired and experienced all necessary skills to be a good and qualified diver. If I had not learned the proper skills and techniques, then I would not have received my divers certification.

I am disgusted at the dive shop, whose name will go unsaid to protect the guilty, who singlehandedly brought down the largest NAUI certification program in the United States. I am also disappointed in the decision of the kinesiology department to

discontinue this program. I attended class and lab, with-

out any absences, and not once did I hear Tom Meineke support one dive shop or another.

Never did he tell us to buy our equipment at one shop or the other, in fact, not once did I hear him mention even one of the dive shops' names.

I don't understand how the University can cancel a program without talking to some of the students who attended the class, or rely solely on the information and allegations of the previously unsaid party.
I think that the kinesiology

department should re-evaluate their decision that discontinued a truly learning and rewarding program.

The diving courses were prominent, steadfast, informative and represented the attitude and reputation that Texas A&M is known for world-wide.

> Vicki Bownds Class of '97