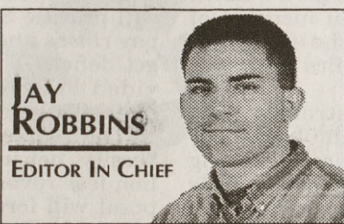


# OPINION

## Graduates, just begin life and work to *do something*

Graduation looms. Three times a year, a group of students starts seeing Aggieland differently. Old problems with school or people become unbearable for some of these changed Ags; others start thinking that nothing seems to matter much at all.



JAY ROBBINS  
EDITOR IN CHIEF

As a result, this group — the Graduating Seniors — might suddenly seem to have suffered a radical personality change.

Well, guess what — they have. They're becoming former students, and "college kids" soon will not describe them. After 17 or more years of checking the box marked "Student" on government forms and credit card applications, most Graduating Seniors now must choose an Occupation.

And Occupations come with Salaries, Benefits, Insurance and other intimidating words that previously only Mom and Dad and other people called "sir" and "ma'am" had to worry about.

Suddenly, graduate and professional schools look like the best places on earth, and Graduating Seniors who've been complaining about burnout start considering another three to 10 years of school.

But most of these almost-grads will come to their senses and calm down, resigning themselves to 50 years of Occupation, Salary, Benefits, Insurance, Marriage, Mortgage, Kids ... Divorce ... and so on ...

And ironically, most Graduating Seniors who undergo this great change must face their new world while remembering only the good times they've had at A&M.

Bad memories fade drastically. The almost-grads gain proper perspective on the parking tickets, the underhanded fee increases, the established good ol' boy system and the embarrassing cult worship of "red-ass Old Army days" that were never like the Aggie myths portray.

Texas A&M, after all, is only a small, humid, out-of-the-way corner of the world.

For most of the Graduating Seniors, A&M has been an oasis of positive experiences. Nine-tenths of Aggie undergraduates walked into their first classes as 18-year-old kids still wearing high school letter jackets and going home every weekend.

On Friday and Saturday, thousands of one-time fish will walk across the stage in G. Rollie. Many hardly would recognize themselves from those first months at A&M. The knowledge and experience of a college education has made them different people; usually, the change is for the better.

... Step, step, take the diploma, shake President Bowen's hand, "Oh my God, I'm finally a college graduate," step, step ... sit back down for another hour ... walk out of G. Rollie and begin Life.

As Life begins, all these big first-time decisions are being made under the screeching internal re-

frain, "DON'T SCREW THIS UP!"

The only option is to just "do something." Anything. Find a place to perch, work hard, be frugal with the birdseed and make a new nest of friends.

And in the long term, create something that lasts. The only legacy anyone needs to leave is a lasting contribution to the world.

Of this newest batch of Graduating Seniors, one might be the Congressional leader who finally reforms welfare and taxation. Another might be the general who will make United Nations military intervention truly effective for preventing war.

**Texas A&M, after all, is only a small, humid, out-of-the-way corner of the world.**

Someone else might take over General Motors and return American cars to the top of the world market, creating thousands of jobs.

One of the almost-grads reading this column might raise a child who is confident, well-adjusted and happy.

Another might counsel at-risk high school kids and give them the encouragement they need to avoid drugs and survive abusive families.

Someone else might step in front of a bullet to save a stranger tonight and barely make page 40 of

a big city newspaper.

What they will do doesn't matter. But they will do something.

And their actions will leave something positive behind. No life is wasted if the person living it can look back and recall the great and small things they leave behind that have made the world better for other people.

The Graduating Seniors should take comfort from that truth while graduation looms and they make their impossibly important decisions.

From Kids to Car Payments, life will happen for Aggieland's newest former students. In 200 years, nobody will give a damn which of these graduates drove a Pinto or a Porsche, or even know any of their names.

The President might remember her Aggie grandfather, a sheriff who didn't tolerate racism in rural Texas. And a billionaire philanthropist might not know about the money his self-made grandmother borrowed from some Aggie banker who took a risk on her business ideas.

Somebody just did something, a small kindness or lifelong endeavor.

History will not record it. But the future will never forget its benefits.

*Jay Robbins is a graduating senior English and political science major*



MARGULIES  
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NEW JERSEY

## A&M's reputation requires increasing fees

After the recent clamor over proposed fee increases, perhaps it is time for an argument in support of such increases to be offered.

The immediate reaction is almost always negative whenever the subject of raising tuition costs, fees and other services is considered.

While no one enjoys paying more than is necessary for an education, the reality is that increases cannot be avoided if Texas A&M is to continue touting itself as "world class."

The University simply cannot operate at optimum capability without money. The fees that students pay contribute to operating costs.

If the fees are not increased, then financial aid possibilities diminish. Without a strong financial aid program, a great many of us would have had to enter job market upon high school graduation.

Secondly, the support staff of the University, the people who maintain the grounds, clean the classrooms, type tests for professors, process new books for the li-



JUSTIN BARNETT  
COLUMNIST

brary and clean up the messes students leave around campus during finals, have not received an across-the-board raise since 1992.

I have no argument with a fee increase which would go toward pay raises for support staff. The only problem with that idea is that each department is required to contribute a percentage of its own funds to supplement pay increases.

In many departments, that amounts to eliminating a position or a program. Pay raises can end up causing a budget cut.

The University support staff can only cross its fingers and hope that a merit-pay increase will be forthcoming in any given fiscal year.

Texas A&M President Dr. Ray Bowen now has offered a mea culpa and has proposed raising the general use fee by only \$10 per semester credit hour in fiscal year 1995-96, and then another \$10 in fiscal year 1996-97.

This seems like a fair and equitable propos-

al, although it will not send the majority of the students dancing 'round the maypole.

The money that Texas A&M needs to operate with cannot come from the state and federal governments alone.

To add further complications, when the state legislature issues an edict from on high to increase the salaries of employees, it does not always send a check to cover such obligations.

The bottom line is that fee increases are necessary and inevitable. Increases will take some time to adjust to and may seem inordinately high in initial stages.

Students who want the University to maintain the current facilities and programs that already exist must accept the fact that fee increases are necessary.

If fees remain the same, then facilities will decline, support staff morale will suffer and future faculty may look elsewhere for more rewarding careers.

If Texas A&M is to maintain its reputation as a leading university, then students will have to pay for that privilege.

*Justin Barnett is senior English major*

## Race should not dictate voting behavior

Them Okies are sure dumb. By now, you would think everyone would have read the instructions for voting.

After all, we have had this country for a couple of hundred years. People should know who to vote for.

Heck, North Carolina knows what to do. So does Louisiana and Georgia, just to name a few.

Let's get up to speed on this. Back in 1965, Congress passed the Voting Rights Act.

The act was not just a good idea, but a necessity. Many states — not just in the "Deep South" — used many disingenuous techniques to keep "undesirables" from voting. The techniques worked.

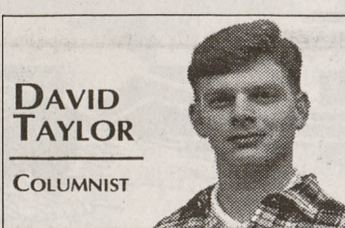
Prior to the passage of the act, in Selma, Alabama, out of a population which was 53 percent black, only 3 percent of the voters were black.

For those who are morally impaired, I'll go ahead and tell you ... this was a bad thing.

Within 5 years of the act's passage, the number of registered black voters in the South doubled.

Here's where the good news ends. In the '70s, many of us were busy being dressed in plaid, corduroy bell-bottoms.

The civil rights attorneys were a tad busier. Many in the "civil rights" community decided that no minority could truly exercise their right to vote unless they were



DAVID TAYLOR  
COLUMNIST

voting for other minorities. The rationale being, only a black could represent blacks, only whites could represent whites, only long-haired hippie dudes could represent Austin.

You get the idea. So with the gentle, guiding hand of our benevolent Department of Justice — i.e. "Do it or we arrest your entire state" — many states made some very creative congressional districts in order to create minority majorities.

Some of these districts are very entertaining. North Carolina had a district that followed a 160 mile length of I-85 and stretched about, oh, 100 yards to either side of the highway. Many others resemble Rorschach ink-blot tests ... after going to the Dixie Chicken on Friday.

Great family fun though this may be, there is one small problem.

It's only the 14th Amendment. At least that's what those kooky folks at the Supreme Court declared.

In a ruling handed down in early July, the Court held that acid-trip districts, such as the North Carolina example, violate the Amendment by denying equal protection under the law by making race the "predominant" factor in drawing the district boundaries.

This makes perfect sense. It is ridiculous to assume that people of the same color are going to have the

same political beliefs merely because of skin tone.

Test this. Read some of the other opinion columns and decide for yourself if we are likely to vote for the same person, black or white.

In fact, isn't this the definition of prejudice? Assuming all people are the same because they are the same color is what we are trying to get away from, not move toward.

Justice Sandra Day O'Connor called this idea "political apartheid."

Justice Anthony Kennedy wrote in the majority opinion that he found the idea that all people of the same race will have the same political ideology "demeaning and offensive."

So do I. And so do those wacko Okies. J.C. Watts is a first-term Congressman from Oklahoma's seventh district.

It seems that over 90 percent of the seventh district is white.

But J.C. Watts is black. Apparently, the residents of the seventh district find political beliefs more important than race. In the process, they elected themselves a very capable representative.

If those drawing the districts would spend a little less time worrying about the skin color of the residents and a little more time on the real needs of the people, maybe a few more J.C. Watts would show up.

That's true democracy.

*David Taylor is a senior management major*

### THE BATTALION

Established in 1893

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. Columns, guest columns, cartoons and letters express the opinions of the authors. Contact the opinion editor for information on submitting guest columns.

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## EDITORIAL

### FEE INCREASE

The Board of Regents' procrastination may greatly burden students.

If procrastination was a virtue, the Texas A&M System Board of Regents would receive many compliments for its behavior this summer.

Faced with a \$6.7 million funding shortfall for the 1995-96 school year, the A&M administration and the Board of Regents for months have considered raising the general use fee to compensate for the Texas Legislature's insufficient appropriations. Texas law allows universities to increase the general use fee equal to the amount of the tuition rate.

The administration first proposed a general use fee increase of \$14 per semester hour, to take effect in Fall '95.

That proposal faced opposition from the majority of student groups around campus who claimed that the increase was "too much, too fast." The regents postponed their decision until they could learn more information on the proposed increase and its effects.

After weeks of inaction by the regents, A&M President Ray Bowen, in an informal meeting with student leaders, offered an alternate proposal.

Instead of sticking students with an increase of \$14 per semester hour in the fall semester, the administration proposed implementing the increase over two semesters. The new plan would allow the University to increase the general use fee \$10 per semester hour in the fall semester and an addition \$10 increase in Fall 1996.

The Texas A&M System Board of Regents still has not made a decision concerning the increase and does not plan to meet again until Aug. 31, after the fall semester already has started.

However, the University already has mailed fee statements for the fall semester to students and their families. Enclosed with the statements is a sheet of paper which offers a brief and ambiguous explanation of the proposed increase. The enclosed information sheet explains that if the regents pass the administration's new proposal, new fee statements billing for the fee in-

crease will be mailed to all students and families.

Although students would be allowed to pay the difference in two installments for a \$15 charge, the University says it will not extend any payment deadlines.

It seems ironic that the University would not be able to extend any deadlines, but the regents easily can extend theirs.

The Texas A&M System Board of Regents should have already decided the fate of the administration's fee increase proposal.

Two other Texas universities already have implemented fee increases.

The University of Texas and Texas Tech University both raised general use fees at the beginning of the summer, allowing enough time for students and their families to adjust their budgets accordingly.

By postponing this decision until after the beginning of the fall semester, the A&M Board of Regents is greatly inconveniencing thousands of students and families.

The University should make great efforts to ensure that the students aren't unnecessarily burdened because of the shortsightedness of the Texas Legislature and the procrastination of the Board of Regents.

Students may address any questions or concerns to:

- Board Chairman Mary Nan West  
210/378-5335
- Vice Chairman T. Michael O'Connor  
512/573-7672
- Regent Alison Brisco  
713/236-2462
- Regent John H. Lindsey  
713/652-4080
- Regent Royce E. Wisenbaker  
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713/659-2435
- Regent M. Guadalupe L. Rangel  
409/845-9600
- A&M Chancellor Dr. Barry Thompson  
409/845-4331
- A&M President Dr. Ray Bowen  
409/845-2217

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