

THE BATTALION

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EDITORIAL

DIVERSITY DAYS

Hispanic Heritage Month is a great way to learn about different cultures.

Paralleling the growing importance of the Hispanic culture in Texas, Texas A&M's Hispanic Heritage Month is becoming an integral part of the A&M culture. However, the month long celebration, which lasts from Sept. 15 until Oct. 13, should not be viewed as a celebration exclusively for Latinos, but rather for everyone at Texas A&M.

own heritage. Fortunately, initial response to the celebration has been a positive one.

Friday night's commemoration of "Fiestas Patrias," sponsored by MSC Committee for the Awareness of Mexican-American Culture and the Mexican Student Association, was sold out.

The dinner, which included performances by a mariachi band and a ballet folklorico, was well-attended by Hispanics and non-Hispanics alike.

Apparently, many non-Hispanics are recognizing the importance of appreciating the Hispanic culture.

The groups organizing the events deserve commendation for providing residents of the community and the University this opportunity to enrich themselves. Hopefully, everyone will take advantage of it.

This year's theme, "Unidos Con Una Sola Voz," or "United with One Voice," is an appropriate one.

All Aggies should realize it is unity for which we should strive.



MARGULIES
Draw the cartoon now about Jim Powell's exit



MAIL CALL

Flag disrespected by fraternities

The Sept. 11 issue of The Battalion ran a picture of Fraternity Bid day. The picture showed a couple of jubilant pledges. What the picture failed to show was the complete scene, of un-Americanism that took place in that day.

As the cadets approached the lawn in front of the Systems Building to lower the American flag, an unruly mob of Greeks had assembled. They were shouting, chanting, waving their fraternity flags, climbing up on the base of the flag pole and carrying on with reckless abandon.

Then, as the American flags were lowered, not a single Greek paid respects. They did not pause or watch silently they did not remove their hats and they didn't even have the common decency and patriotism to place their hands over their hearts.

As citizens of the United States it is their right to do what they please. But as Americans, as Texans and as Aggies we all have a higher standard to uphold.

I have often wondered why the anti-Greek sentiment is so high,

why people hate the fraternities and wear NO FRAT t-shirts. Now I believe I know why.

Not only do the Greeks make themselves look unpatriotic, but they tarnish this University's reputation and bring shame on the name "Texas Aggie."

Matthew Merrill
Class of '96
accompanied by 22 signatures

Hill, Taylor, misled on foreign policy

The columns written by Adam Hill and David Taylor on Sept. 7 share a critical flaw — the presumption that the U.S. and President Clinton should make military decisions without the input of other countries.

Taylor condemns Clinton's policy shifts, but doesn't acknowledge the great disagreement within the U.N.

The U.N., thankfully, is also the reason we are not in a position to send in Hill's Marine artillery regiments to finish off the Serbs.

Ben Shaw
College Station



Funding cuts hurt less fortunate

W ealthy alleged murderers, religious fundamentalists and post-apocalyptic warfare fans take heart.

Recently, the Fates have been aligning themselves in your favor.

While the Mark Fuhrman tapes went on trial in the O.J. Simpson murder case, the pro-choice Arlen Specter couldn't get himself invited to the Christian Coalition's winging and the Senate voted more funds for the B-2 Stealth Bomber.

But what does all of this business mean for the average man?

Well, if destitute individuals have been accused of murder and are expecting a defense along the lines of O.J.'s, perhaps they ought to rub the Hollywood glitter from their eyes and rejoin the rest of the country.

It's estimated O.J. will spend around \$6 million by the time his trial is finished. While he's shelling out \$100,000 for a jury consultant and lining up the DNA specialists, the state of Alabama has set a \$1,000 dollar limit on out-of-court fees for lawyers defending death row cases.

And as the Simpson trial drags itself tiredly to its conclusion, it becomes increasingly difficult to remember who is being accused of what. While Fuhrman was revealed each week as more and more of a racist pig, the hubbub surrounding his tape-recorded lectures on the benefits of police brutality also served to highlight a glaring fact of life: Money may not buy happiness, but it can get somebody one hell of a good criminal defense team.

Obscure the important facts for a long enough time, and people will forget what was so important in the first place.

While Simpson's lawyers show what sort of defense can be purchased for a few million dollars, the Republicans in Congress



CHRIS STIDVENT
COLUMNIST

voted this year to cut the Legal Services Corporation fund by 24 percent.

The LSC devotes its time to the defense of indigent clients, those who have pressing legal troubles but lack the funds to pay for truly competent representation.

Republican members of Congress view the LSC as a leftist threat, claiming that its lawyers have used their clients' cases to lobby for reforms in the state and Federal welfare systems. So, while they protect us all from the minions of socialism, poor people will get ripped off and go to the slammer in droves because they don't have the funds for decent legal counsel.

Maybe our nation's poor ought to enroll in flight school, or join the Air Force. The military appears to be the one institution in America that has survived the zeal of the budget cutter's hatchet relatively unscathed.

While Congress cuts spending for environmental protection, welfare, Medicare and just about all other forms of social services, our armed forces chug right along.

Two weeks ago, the House of Representatives approved a \$265.3 billion spending plan for the military. This bill includes provisions for more Stealth bombers and some anti-missile defense systems based on the Star Wars programs of the 1980s.

Oddly enough, even the Pentagon has admitted that it neither wants, nor needs, more bombers.

Ask the common man which problem is more pressing — getting blown up by North Korea, or living in a society where the government robs its own citizens to pay for useless military projects.

In other words, we spend all of this money to defend ourselves from largely imaginary threats. Does anybody feel any safer at night?

To show the rest of the nation how in-

touch they are with the problems of the average citizen, Republican presidential hopefuls flocked to the Christian Coalition's New York convention a couple of weekends ago. They were there to protest that each one of them was a tad more "godly" than the others.

They took turns swearing to the religious faithful that they were vehemently pro-life, in favor of school prayer and strongly in support of the American family.

Only poor old Arlen Specter was left out. He wasn't invited because of his pro-choice stance, which is somewhat unpopular within the Republican party and absolutely despised amongst the "God squad" that makes up the Christian Coalition.

While Congress cuts spending for environmental protection, welfare and Medicare, our armed forces chug right along.

It appears that the eventual Republican presidential candidate is going to have to pass through this religious test of fire if he is going to have any hopes of being elected by his own party.

And, the more radical the Republicans are forced to become, the less likely it is that they will be in support of social spending for true pro-family programs, such as the LSC.

Buying us all some new airplanes and telling us not to have abortions are nice sentiments, but they won't fill the gap left by the cuts in funding for programs such as welfare and the LSC.

The poor get poorer, the rich go free and the Republicans don't seem to care.

I guess some days it just doesn't pay to be down and out.

Chris Stidvent is a senior English and philosophy major

Teaching them while they're young

Texas could benefit by teaching school children Spanish and English

N o hablo American. Ich spreche Texan.

The age-old debate about making English our national language has returned once more.

Not that any Englishman would ever consider what I speak to be the Queen's English.

This idea sounds pretty stupid to me — we have risen to be the world's number one economic power without ever having an official national language, so why implement one now?

This attempt is not new. There is a myth that German once missed being the national language by one Senate vote.

It's untrue. Too bad. I speak German fluently, so I wouldn't mind, and nor would half of Pennsylvania.

Joe Bob Briggs, syndicated columnist, even suggested that we pick a language at random, to avoid any one having an unfair advantage over the others. Icelandic was his suggestion.

The reason this issue has surfaced again is a result of the huge influx of Hispanic immigrants, both legal and illegal.

This debate came to a head recently when a judge decided that a



JAMES BERNSEN
STAFF WRITER

Hispanic woman was guilty of child abuse because she spoke only Spanish to her young daughter.

The child's father argued that she wasn't being prepared for school.

First of all, I don't think we need to be throwing around the term "child abuse" lightly. But whether the mother likes it or not, English is vital in this day and age. The problem is, Spanish is vital also.

Texans do not really speak like the rest of America, so I'll just speak on the local aspect.

This is because Texas is the meeting ground between two distinct cultures.

What we need to do is not recognize one language, but teach both Spanish and English to all school children.

High school language classes don't cut it. I learned more in one semester at college than I ever did in two years of high school Spanish.

First of all, there were several native speakers in our class who got easy A's while the rest of us struggled.

Secondly, we never spoke it

in class, we just learned it for the test and forgot it.

What we need to do in Texas is take the mentality of Canada and most European countries and focus more on language education in school, especially for young children.

It has been proved scientifically that they are more able to learn a language the younger they are.

If we begin teaching Spanish to first graders, these school children can learn it much faster and easier than adults.

Learning a second language fluently changes someone's attitude on life.

After learning German, I realized how much of society is wrapped up in simple words and phrases.

The language enhanced my understanding of German society, government and ... Weltanschauung — some words can just never be translated.

The benefits of teaching Spanish to everybody outweigh the perks of a uni-lingual society.

Trade, with or without NAFTA, would be greatly improved.

Texas businessmen and women would have a huge advantage in getting into a vast, expanding market in Central and South America.

Teaching Spanish on an equal or near-equal basis with English would also help integrate society here in Texas.

Many Hispanics may feel left out and alienated. And some of them have been longer than my ancestors have.

And when my ancestors moved here, by the way, everyone knew Spanish because it was still part of Mexico.

Teaching Spanish and English would help integrate society in Texas.

The Hispanics in Texas should not be seen as the liability some see them as. They represent a vast untapped resource for Texas.

Of course, all this would require more funds for education. Maybe we could cut down on the free condoms (they're only 25 cents in a 7-11 bathroom) to pay for it.

That way we can be more prepared for the next century.

And what does it matter what the "national language" is.

The de facto one will always be English.

James Bernsen is a senior journalism major