

Some products never meant to bear A&M seal

Boy, and I thought the Home Shopping Network was a super invention. It offers an unparalleled variety of products that make acrylic profiles of Elvis Presley painted on black velvet look classy. I can just lie on the couch and order vegetable dehydrators and aerosol cans of spray-on hair, reaching for the telephone with one flip of my nimble wrist. But my idolization of the HSN is over now that I've seen the November issue of the Texas Aggie, which bills itself as "The Alumni Magazine of Texas A&M University." While I was looking through it I came across all kinds of wacky advertisements for products bearing the illustrious A&M seal. With such a wide variety of purchasable goods, I'm sure there's a little something in there for each and every taste-conscious consumer. As I flipped through the magazine, I was almost immediately confronted with the opportunity to buy my own set of "Texas A&M Branding Irons." I could choose between the ceremonial gold-plated copy and the more affordable nickel-plated model. I assume that since this isn't coated in precious metal, it's suitable for everyday use. Last one fears that their iron might be damaged after they have snuck up behind one of their closest friends and scarred him forever with the University logo, the ad lets us know that "The nickel iron may be heated by almost any source ... and will brand materials such as leather or wood." Now you can't tell me that your best friend's hide is tougher than a good piece of mahogany.

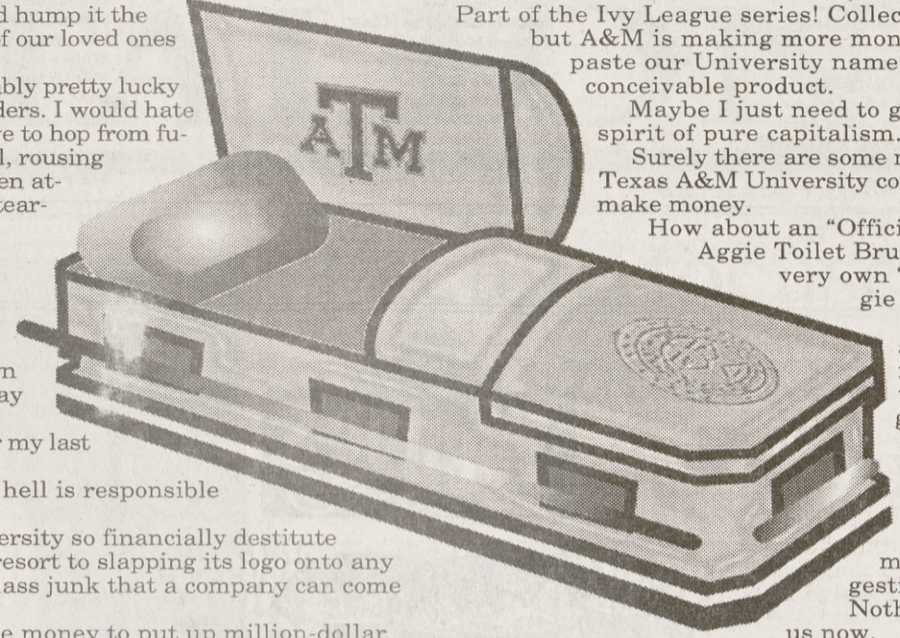
**CHRIS STIDVENT**  
COLUMNIST



Not only is it an attractive conversation piece, it's good for some old-fashioned family fun and discipline. If Johnny brings home some bad grades after his first semester of building bonfire and drinking beer, his father can simply whip out his "Official Aggie Branding Iron" and go to work. The last page of the magazine gave me the chance to buy an "Official Texas A&M Lamp" with a "richly detailed, three-dimensional re-creation of the University Seal." Unfortunately, I had already ordered another Aggie lamp advertised a few pages earlier. Nobody let me know that I was only buying a fraudulent copy of an official Aggie product. Damn, I always get stuck with the unofficial stuff. Toward the middle of the magazine, hidden among a slew of the usual decals, bumper stickers, gaudy T-shirts and stuffed replica mascots, is the ultimate in offensive Aggie paraphernalia. For those proud Aggies who aren't content to spend their entire lives surrounded by glitzy remnants of the University they once attended, Oak Grove International is providing them with a little something that will outlive even the most ancient fightin' Texas Aggie cadet. That's right, it's the Texas A&M coffin. As the advertisement says, "Rest Assured this permanent fiberglass 'Aggie' casket will provide the stability and peace of mind on your most important journey." I assume they're talking about our spiritual journey into Aggie Heaven, not our physical trip 6 feet under the ground. A call to the company that manufactures this thing revealed some further information. It costs between \$3,500 and \$4,000, and they have had about

two dozen orders over the past year. I promise I'm not making this up — I'm really not this clever. Regrettably, the coffin doesn't play the "Aggie War Hymn" each time that it is opened and closed, so I guess we won't all be able to sound off and hump it the next time one of our loved ones is buried. That's probably pretty lucky for our yell leaders. I would hate for them to have to hop from funeral to funeral, rousing the grief-stricken attendees into a tearful chorus of "Hullabaloo." I have but one question before I rush to the phone to put my very own coffin on layaway until the time rolls around for my last Aggie hurrah. Who in the hell is responsible for this? Is our University so financially destitute that it has to resort to slapping its logo onto any piece of fiberglass junk that a company can come up with? We have the money to put up million-dollar statues all over campus, but we still have to squeeze every last penny out of our University's name and seal. Perhaps I am being a bit hasty in my rush to pass judgment.

Maybe we are getting an even tradeoff. Our University gets around \$50 for each official Aggie coffin that is sold, and all we have to give up is our self-respect as a credible academic institution. That's right, Harvard can proudly say it may not have its own official casket (Just imagine — Part of the Ivy League series! Collect them all!), but A&M is making more money as we paste our University name onto every conceivable product. Maybe I just need to get into the spirit of pure capitalism. Surely there are some more things Texas A&M University could license to make money. How about an "Official Texas Aggie Toilet Brush" or your very own "Official Aggie Spittoon"? We have apparently realized that the limits of good taste are not firm boundaries but only gentle and easily dismissible suggestions. Nothing can stop us now. See, there are ways to use the system, we just have to start trying harder.



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**THE BATTALION**  
Established in 1893

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**EDITORIAL**  
**HOWDY DUTY**  
Forgetting to say 'Howdy' could have worldwide repercussions.

Today is the kickoff for the annual Howdy Week at Texas A&M University. The Traditions Council's focus on the revival of this tradition gives much-needed attention to a most serious problem on our campus. An annual lull, which usually occurs after midterms, threatens the existence of the very glue that holds Aggie-land together. No more "Howdy" means drowsy students, who, if allowed to continue in poor spirits, would affect the entire community. Soon, the Brazos Valley would undergo economic hardship from the negativity which abounds on our campus. If left unchecked, there is no telling how far this illness might spread. The very pillars of our society are not immune from the repercussions. Indeed, the death of the "Howdy" tradition can only signal one thing: the decline of western civilization as we know it. What else would we be left to say? Hello? Hi? How's it goin'? A greeting like "Howdy" proves to the world that we inhabit the friendliest campus in the world. Without our friendliness, the world's happiness quotient would surely plunge. Without "Howdy," could Texas really claim to be the Lone Star state, or America, the land of the free? There is no need to look away or turn one's head when another student passes on the sidewalk. Ignoring others will only contribute to the problem. It is the students' duty to let "Howdy" live in their hearts and on their lips. This duty must even supersede responsibilities as a U.S. citizen or as a member of the human family. For if we do not qualify our every conversation with "Howdy," indeed, we have said nothing at all.

**When in doubt, 'just table it'**  
The Student Senate suffers from indecision and lack of leadership skills

Last Wednesday night, I witnessed possibly the most pathetic meeting I have ever attended. I have seen hard issues such as abortion and rights of homosexuals debated between two sides who were both intensely passionate about their beliefs. In these meetings I witnessed both great and terrible leadership. Last Wednesday the Student Senate was not debating about the lives of unborn children or the rights of a certain group of people. They were debating the Truth in Representation bill. This bill would have repealed a bill passed by the Student Senate in 1993. Whew! Sounds like a tough one. The bill to be repealed was a compromise which recommended a three-hour multiculturalism course requirement be implemented. Whether it was a good or bad bill is not at all relevant. What matters is the pathetic lack of fortitude and decisiveness displayed at a Texas A&M Student Senate meeting. I am not criticizing all of the Student Senate. Some senators acted in the interest of the Senate and the University. However, most acted purely in the interest of uselessness. The debate on the Truth in Representation bill did not begin until around 10 p.m., a full two and a half hours after the meeting began. When the debate did finally start, it was well done. Many wanted the bill passed because they didn't want a multiculturalism requirement. Many wanted it passed because they wanted a six-hour requirement. And, many did not want it passed until they passed the six-hour requirement because then it would look like the Student Senate didn't care about minorities. In this debate, both sides of the argu-

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ment continually used the phrase "We must do what our constituents want." It doesn't take a rocket scientist to figure out how the majority of the student body here feels on the multiculturalism requirement. They do not want it. However, because the Student Senate were unaware of this silent majority against required multicultural classes, it spent the two weeks prior to this meeting having constituent days and holding forums to find out what its constituents wanted. One would think it could have figured out what its constituents desired, and at first, it seemed as though it had. The Student Senate voted, approving the repeal of the 1993 bill. This was some time before 11 p.m. Then a senator turned around and realized, "Jeepers creepers, we did not get the input of our many guests. Oh my, what if they don't like our decision?" So a senator asked that the bill be reconsidered so that they could know what the guests present thought of the bill. This meant that they would throw out the previous vote and start all over. Keep in mind this was more than three hours after the meeting began. The senators had just spent two weeks trying to figure out what was on the minds of students. Every guest who was present had the opportunity in the last two weeks to attend a forum or go to Constituency Day in the MSC. Our fine, all beauty but no brains student body president stood up and gave an impassioned plea that the senate reconsider this bill because if it didn't, it would look like it didn't care. He then scolded the Senate and said that it would look terrible if it passed this bill because it would be inexcusable for the Student Senate to have no opinion. He was met with applause by those who

wanted to reconsider the bill. Some debate was continuing from guests when, out of the blue, a senator made a motion to table the bill. He said the senators needed more time to think this over and to talk to their constituents. His motion passed and the Student Senate tabled the bill. I left at midnight. After hours of my time was spent with an interest in the outcome of the bill, they tabled it. Mr. student body president, do you want to know what looks terrible? The Student Senate, in general, doesn't know whether to scratch its watch or wind its rear-end. After two weeks of talking to constituents and two hours of debate, the Student Senate took absolutely no action whatsoever. It has no opinion. It looked terrible — not because the position that I would advocate did not pass — but because after two weeks of talking to constituents and two hours of debate, it did not take any action. It did not repeal the 1993 bill, but the senate looked more indecisive than ever. From what I hear, many student senators fancy themselves future politicians. Just a word of advice for you little Gingriches and Clintons ... just because you are called "student leaders" on campus doesn't mean you can lead. Most leaders take action without needing an extra week for more pats on the back or words of good cheer. It is apparent from the debacle last week that the majority of the Student Senate wouldn't know leadership or decisiveness if it came up and shook hands with them. Lydia Percival is a senior journalism and political science major



**MAIL CALL**

**Stealing is bad: watching is worse**  
I am writing to describe a scene I recently witnessed at one of College Station's finer eateries. Many of us are familiar with the A&M artwork that adorns the walls of restaurants around town. Before leaving one of these restaurants, a person there decided to steal one of these drawings. This was brought to my attention as he streaked across the parking lot, picture in hand, and jumped into a truck. It is not surprising that someone would do something like this; we all know that there are classless people everywhere. However, the reaction of the people who had seen this event take place was sad. They looked at each other with sheepish grins, all with the knowledge that what had occurred was wrong. Not a single person had the courage to try to stop the guy. The reaction of the people who had witnessed the scene lends a disturbing insight into the mentalities of us in the restaurant. Apathy sucks. Gregory McClellan Lowry Class of '98 The Battalion encourages letters to the editor and will print as many as space allows. Letters must be 300 words or less and include the author's name, class and phone number. We reserve the right to edit letters for length, style and accuracy. Letters may be submitted in person at 013 Reed McDonald. A valid student ID is required. Letters may also be mailed to: The Battalion - Mail Call 013 Reed McDonald Fax: Texas A&M University (409) 845-2647 College Station, TX E-mail: 77843-1111 Batt@tamvm1.tamu.edu