

Corps cadets rise above stereotypes

Some call them keepers of the spirit. Others say they are the backbone of Texas A&M. Many, including myself, would say they are a bunch of spineless, racist, close-minded people who act superior.

PAMELA BENSON
COLUMNIST



Or so I thought. This perception of the Corps of Cadets can be attributed to misinformation and misunderstanding.

When or if a few Corps members do something offensive, the entire group is pegged as sharing the same elitist beliefs and attitudes as the individuals that stepped out of line.

Recently, five Corps members helped me realize there are also individuals who, while very proud of their affiliation with the Corps, have their own ideas. "Andrew," "Frank," "Jeff," "Adam" and "Brad" impressed me at a recent retreat.

The weekend was sponsored by University Awareness for Cultural Together-ness, an organization which focuses on promoting unity through cultural diversity. The retreat was an opportunity to voice opinions about issues: race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation and a host of other topics that are often difficult to talk about.

Although the overall environment of the retreat was relaxed, Andrew openly admitted he was apprehensive about attending the retreat. He felt the word "multiculturalism" allowed for no happy medium — it was either something to live your life by or to abhor.

Soon, Andrew realized multiculturalism was not so completely polarized. "The way I see it, multiculturalism is sim-

ply recognizing, appreciating and learning about the differences that exist in our society. But in appreciating those differences, I don't condone any wrong actions," he said.

It was that realization that started a real path of understanding for everyone who attended the retreat.

Frank showed a great interest in the path of understanding when he expressed his excitement at having the opportunity to meet students he might not normally speak to.

He also looked at the retreat as a way to educate others about the Corps of Cadets.

ment of Colored People, when he heard Williams refused to take his hat off in the Memorial Student Center.

After speaking with Williams, he realized a misunderstanding should not be the foundation for one's perception of an individual.

But their agreement was not the issue. The fact that they both had a better understanding of each others' perspectives gave them time to laugh and realize they had much in common.

It was Jeff who continuously made the retreat participants examine what was taking place with issues on campus.

His thought-provoking comments and questions made participants think about more than their actions, and brought a sensitive and honest attitude to the group.

These guys left me wondering where they've been. Maybe they've been there all along, and the student body has chosen to focus on the negative situations that occasionally surface in the Corps.

Maybe some feel intimidated by the unknown and therefore create lies to satisfy their curiosity.

The people who are responsible for warping my views are the ones who left the Corps, for whatever reason, and now bash it. I now realize that I

should re-evaluate my perceptions of the Corps of Cadets.

Now, when I see a member of the Corps, I wonder what kind of person they are. Do they see me and think I shouldn't be here?

Do they say howdy to see if I will respond? Or are they just going through the motions of the day like most students?

Perhaps it would be better to take the advice Jeff recommended; "start with a smile."

Pamela Benson is a senior journalism major



"One reason the Corps is associated with a lot of negativity is because there are a large amount of white males in the organization, but it is never mentioned that we have several different ethnicities represented, as well as women," he said.

Frank had this opportunity to educate others, but he also learned about how one can easily judge someone on a misunderstanding.

He had a negative attitude towards Shawn Williams, president of the Texas A&M chapter of the National Association for the Advance-

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EDITORIAL SHUTDOWN

Clinton's courageous veto is a part of necessary checks and balances.

Republican legislators passed a stopgap spending measure late Monday afternoon that would prevent a federal shutdown, but several provisions, one of which called for Medicare premium increase caused President Clinton to veto the bill.

Instead, he presented a borrowing bill, which would allow government operations to continue, but without the attached GOP amendments he opposes.

Clinton's problem with the Republican balanced budget proposal is the cuts, especially in Medicare, Medicaid, student loans and other social programs.

Clinton also objects to the Republican proposal, in part, because it is not completed. Congress should have already passed a budget, but bills are still tied up in the drafting process.

Once complete, Clinton has courageously vowed to veto the bill, even though a conservative tide sweeping the nation could mean negative political consequences for his re-election efforts.

He is doing an uncommon thing by sticking to his principles, and he is right to stand his ground. He should not be forced to give in to the Republican demands he feels would be harmful to our nation.

At the same time, the Legislature's demands and midnight hour scare tactics are part of the system of checks and balances that helps to make America's brand of democracy unique.

Perhaps all of this could be avoided if the Legislature had done its job to begin with and passed a budget on time.

The federal shutdown could provide a much needed business lesson for our Congress. The money ran out, and the business — in this case, the federal government — shut down.

We elect our leaders to run the business of our country, not play games.

Clinton is right to stick by his vision for America, and not to be blinded by empty posturing and political games.

DEADLY DECISION

President Bowen should support the use of curriculum to help stop AIDS.

Roughly one in 250 Americans are infected with HIV according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Generalizing from this statistic, around 150 students at Texas A&M are probably infected with HIV, and this is probably a modest estimate.

Since the mid-1980s, surgeon generals have preached education as a method to combat the AIDS epidemic. However, Texas A&M University President Dr. Ray Bowen seems to disagree.

In a letter to the Faculty Senate dictating his reasons why students should not be required to take a health and kinesiology course that addresses issues including HIV/AIDS, Bowen states that it is "bad academic policy to use the required curriculum to address directly existing community problems at the University."

He goes on to say that the purpose of the University curriculum is to prepare students to be successful in their professional and personal lives.

Bowen should realize that an epidemic like that of HIV/AIDS and other STDs could definitely

affect a student's professional or personal life.

Furthermore, Bowen says in the letter that if such a course were introduced, "it would be an open invitation that other contemporary social and political issues be included" in the curriculum.

It seems that in his fear of introducing political correctness to the curriculum of Texas A&M, Bowen is ignoring an opportunity to educate students in subject that might someday spare their lives.

In his letter, Bowen includes a disclaimer that he regrets that his decision will be interpreted as a lack of sensitivity on his part for the devastating effects of HIV and AIDS. However, Bowen cannot know for sure if there are students that have slipped through the public school system cracks uneducated on how HIV is contracted. A requirement course that addresses such issues would ensure that all students would be informed.

It has become painfully clear that Bowen either underestimates the importance of education about HIV, or, despite what he says, simply does not care.

NOT ON MY TAB

Programs which only benefit the Corps should not be funded by all students.

In 1965, participation in the Corps of Cadets was no longer a requirement to attend Texas A&M University. From that point on, the Corps, despite its strong history of pride and tradition, has been an optional organization for students. However, many are still footing the bill.

Last semester many on-campus students became upset when they were informed that they were paying an average cost of \$30 a semester to support two programs benefiting only the Corps. In an effort to appease on-campus students and to make the funding of the programs more fair, RHA passed a resolution last week suggesting that the program funding be distributed to off-campus students as well.

The General Student Fee Bill, which calls for alumni funding, a flat fee for all students and a graduated fee with a heavier fee for Corps members, will be presented before the Student Services Committee Sunday.

Despite RHA's attempt to alleviate a problem, the bill misses the mark.

The Corps Room Scholarship Program waives housing fees for up to 100 freshmen with ROTC scholarships, and The Corps Leadership Training Adviser Program provides for the hiring of five tactical advisers in the Corps administration.

Neither program directly benefits non-reg students, however, all students are expected to pay.

Obviously, the two programs in question provide many benefits for Corps members each year, and the elimination of the programs would greatly disadvantage the Corps.

However, mandating that all students pay for programs that only benefit one organization is unfair, and students should attempt to halt the passage of such a proposal.

The only fair solution to the problem would be for the Corps to completely fund the two programs itself.



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U.S. needs strength through unity

If there was ever an overused cliché in American rhetoric, it is a phrase you have probably heard in the current debate over multiculturalism.

It is the phrase "our strength is in our diversity." Huh? Our strength is in our what?

In examining this phrase, I immediately think of one week ago when Canada remained a whole country by less than 1 percent of the vote.

More than likely, Quebec will eventually achieve separation. The reason they are in this mess is because they believe their "strength is in their diversity."

A friend of mine is from Canada, and she told me quite a bit about her perception of what is going on in her home country.

She tells me Quebec does not accept Canadian culture or language as their own.

Now before all you bilingualists start levitating from the steam coming out your ears, I don't believe everyone should only learn the language of their culture.

I believe everyone should learn the language of their families.

However, to succeed in Quebec or the United States one must grasp and master the English language.

If you do not, then you will fail. Quebec refused to do this and as a result resented having to play second fiddle to the rest of Canada.

Imagine if Texas, as a part of the United States, only spoke Spanish and refused to accept English or American culture.

By emphasizing our differences, we would enjoy third-world status within the nation.

LYDIA PERCIVAL
COLUMNIST



If Quebec could instead maintain their culture, yet emphasize what they have in common with the rest of Canada, then perhaps Canada could be united.

How long would the Middle East Peace Plan last if Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization tried to find strength in their diversity?

How many lives would be saved if the former Yugoslavia would stop thinking about their differences and focus on their common traits?

Is Bosnia what America hopes to become by emphasizing our diversity?

On a personal level, I am getting married soon and shudder to think what our marriage would be like if we emphasized differences. As a couple, we bring different things to the relationship.

My fiancée is a farm boy. Personally, I can't tell a Live Oak from a Cactus.

I love Broadway musicals. He doesn't know the difference between The Phantom of the Opera and Jason from the Friday the 13th movies.

As far as he is concerned, they both wear white masks.

Yet my fiancée goes hunting and does various farm boy stuff while I stay home and watch a PBS special on the making of the Guys and Dolls soundtrack.

These are our personal characteristics, but they are not what will make our marriage strong.

Our marriage will be strengthened by our shared beliefs and values.

When we are together, we talk about our jobs, our families and politics.

Very rarely do I ask him about killing a deer and even less often does he ask about Barbra Streisand's latest Broadway album.

Our strength as a couple is not in our diversity and neither is America's.

America's strength is in its commonness. America's strength is in its great experiment called democracy.

Its strength is that we all pledge allegiance to the same flag.

Its strength is in the immigrants who made this country great.

Immigrants aren't America's strength simply because they came from Ireland or Mexico or Africa.

They give this nation strength because together, they put this country on a course to fulfill its amazing potential.

In the process, they helped America learn to appreciate good whiskey, great food and beautiful music.

All that, and no one had to take a single college class on the subject.

Since the O.J. Simpson verdict, many have been wringing their hands wondering how to improve race relations.

How about dumping the hyphenated names we use as adjectives and going back to the old practice of all being American?

Let us admit that "strength in diversity" is just as false as any oxymoron and try something like "strength for a diverse people through a common love for our country and a belief in all that makes us good."

While it may not fit on a T-shirt as nicely, and it might put some professors out of a job, America would be all the better with a slogan that is true to its purpose.

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