

Family values taught by example

"Success is achieving what you don't have. Happiness is being content with the things you do have." This is a saying that caught my attention, despite being the slogan for a beer commercial.

ALEX MILLER
COLUMNIST



I have hope for the future. Recent census data shows that in the last few years the divorce rate has declined. It is only by a very small margin, but nevertheless a decline.

It is something that I predicted. With so many today being the product of dysfunctional homes, it seems our society is finally placing greater importance on lifetime commitments than previous generations.

It hasn't been easy. Except for a relative few, Hollywood stars, sports figures and talk show hosts who inundate our television screen have made bed-hopping look like the number one past time in the land of the free. In fact, just the other day I heard that Melissa Etheridge, professed lesbian rock star, was shopping for sperm, because she and her girlfriend wanted to have a child together.

Now I'm no expert, but it seems to me there is some profound reason, be it scientific or religious, that a man and a woman are both needed for procreation, which brings me to my point.

Never in my life was I told that one's family was the most important possession. Not once did I hear this, and yet I know it to be true. No one ever said this because I was taught by example.

I was taught by a couple who went to my church. They had been together for what seemed like eternity, and yet they never took each other for granted. They were involved in almost everything the town had to offer,

but never sought the limelight. They were pillars of the church — he served as an usher and she was the secretary.

This couple had two kids of whom they were obviously proud. They made them attend church even though the kids often didn't want to go. They said it was important because "The

one time God decides to speak to you, it is important to be present," so the kids went.

Their son played soccer at least once a week, and though he never really asked them and never really thanked them, they could always be found on the sidelines.

There was always time to take the kids camping or to make them the exact birthday cake they wanted. While they may tell you it was never a sacrifice, they were always sacrificing.

I never knew them to utter a word in hate, and learned from them to respect others and their ideas. They taught their kids right and wrong and let them know it was not always popular to be right and not always right to be popular.

This couple stood behind their kids regardless, giving them the confidence and background to succeed.

Since I've been in college they have served as youth counselors for my church, where many more kids have had the privilege of interacting with them and calling them their friends.

I haven't always considered myself lucky to know them, but as I get older, I find there is nothing I could have done without them. The people I speak of are not just the friendliest people in my hometown — they are my parents.

They have been a driving force in my life and have, even without me knowing it,

taught me nothing is more important than my family. Whenever I feel like the world is going against everything I believe, I can always look to my parents' examples to know what is right and proper.

I am not insinuating that we don't argue and fight — we're good at it — but no matter what, my family stands ever vigilant in support of me. I hope I can take the things I have learned from them and shape those things into the way I will deal with my family someday. I hope I will be glad to make the kind of sacrifices a family requires when that time comes.

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Alex Haley, the author of *Roots*, once said, "Every time one of the old folks in our family passes away, it is like a library burning down."

Maybe someday I will equate my parents with a library filled with a wealth of stories, but for now they are like a well-worn set of encyclopedias which detail exactly how this "parenting" thing should be done.

Several years ago, success to me meant having lots of money; now, success means becoming half the person either one of my parents are. I may never achieve that, but I will always be content as Phil and Marion's son.

If you have skipped over the mushy junk in this column, I have only one point: Family matters. Thanks, Mom and Dad.

Alex Miller is senior bioenvironmental science major



MAIL CALL

Cain pool benefits A&M, community

Raising Cain. Cain pool, that is. The Board of Regents will decide in December about demolishing the outdoor Cain pool.

An olympic-size outdoor pool should not be tossed away. Outdoor pools have zero air-conditioning and heating costs.

Although the new Rec center has a large indoor pool, indoor and outdoor swimming are not at all equivalent experiences, and its outdoor pool is definitely not for conditioning or racing.

Cain Pool would be very attractive with surrounding hedges and a poolside unroofed shower/locker area, a la Barton Springs in Austin.

Indoor swimming is artificial and inferior as compared to sun, grass, clouds and breeze. The myriad of short summer programs held at A&M for pre-college students are much better served by Cain pool.

Cain is much more convenient for regular campus users during the day, who create street traffic to get the new facility.

A&M needs to give more thought to tradition as it relates to campus structures. Alumni are always happier if they recognize their alma mater.

The Available Fund tends to drives out older structures as does the view of Physical Plan, which prefers new buildings requiring very little maintenance. We should look beyond just those influences.

The essential thing is to postpone a decision to destroy the pool until present and former students make their views known.

Cain pool was presented to A&M by the Association of Former Students and has not outlived its usefulness. The Regents would take notice of letters from present and former students.

A&M should support reality, as opposed to plastic simulations. Going back to natural turf in Kyle Field is the first step. Keeping Cain pool should be the second.

R.A. Kenefick
Professor of Physics

Beatles hype not true affection

What's with The Beatles popularity contest? It seems as though everyone is trying to outdo each other in their elaborate recollections of childhood Beatles memories.

It makes me laugh when some fool actually says that they think they understand the music better than their parents.

I don't think that we'll ever understand or experience the complete lunacy that went hand-in-hand with Beatle appearances and releases. (That is, until New Kids on the Block stages their long overdue reunion tour.)

Ask those same people about The Beatles a year or two from now, and I doubt you'll get any answers involving crayons or church gospel substitutions. I also hope that MTV realizes some things should be left alone and doesn't make "Free as a bird" one of their flavor of the month Buzz-Clips.

Thomas Arnold
Class of '95

Buffin, editorial misses R.C.'s point

Nitpicking commentary in a college newspaper is commonplace and is normally acceptable. It is understood that the writer has limited experience and is prone to making unfounded statements and exercising poor judgment.

However, the Nov. 15 sports column by Kristina Buffin and the editorial regarding "Ladies' Chalk Talk with R.C." beg for a response.

First of all, do not assume that you or any feminist speak

for all women. More than 200 women attended Tuesday night's event, which was organized by women who wanted to learn more about football.

Coach R.C. Slocum graciously accepted their invitation, taking valuable time from his busy schedule.

Buffin chastises R.C. for starting his discussion with the assumption that the audience knew little about football. He obviously meant nothing derogatory, however.

Should he have started with a detailed discussion of a two-deep zone defense or a nickel package?

The point is that R.C. Slocum was there at the request of women, many of whom admitted that they did not know the basics of football.

In addition, the A&M athletic department does not host the Quarterback Club, which is an independent entity. Likewise, the "Chalk Talk" was a privately organized event that invited R.C. as a guest.

Since very few women have ever played football — and a large number of men have in some form — it is not sexist to assume that women lack the same degree of knowledge that men may possess about the game. That is reality.

Basically, don't try to tell me or any other women when we should be offended. I wear my Aggie ring with pride and I support Aggie athletics, men or women.

R.C. Slocum has a deep appreciation and respect for all of Texas A&M's football fans, male or female.

Elizabeth Dalton
Class of '90

This letter is in response to Kristina Buffin's Nov. 15 sports column about R.C. Slocum's "Chalk Talk." I was really surprised about everything was blown way out of proportion.

I was at the Quarterback Club meeting when Tim Cassidy announced that R.C. was going to hold this "Chalk Talk."

This session was really for those women who do not know much at all, if anything, about the game of football and what takes place out on the field.

I'm sure some people were offended in some of the things he said. But he has to start at the beginning for those who know nothing and not in the middle and lose a few people.

It would be ridiculous to say that R.C. Slocum, the 2nd winningest active coach in Div. 1-A and someone who's been here at A&M for over 20 years, purposely went out with the intention to offend women, get real.

I've got a grandmother and mother who could have used his session because they are examples of women who don't know what is going on and ask the same questions over and over.

And yes, as men we sometimes don't have the patience to tell them repeatedly the answers they seek.

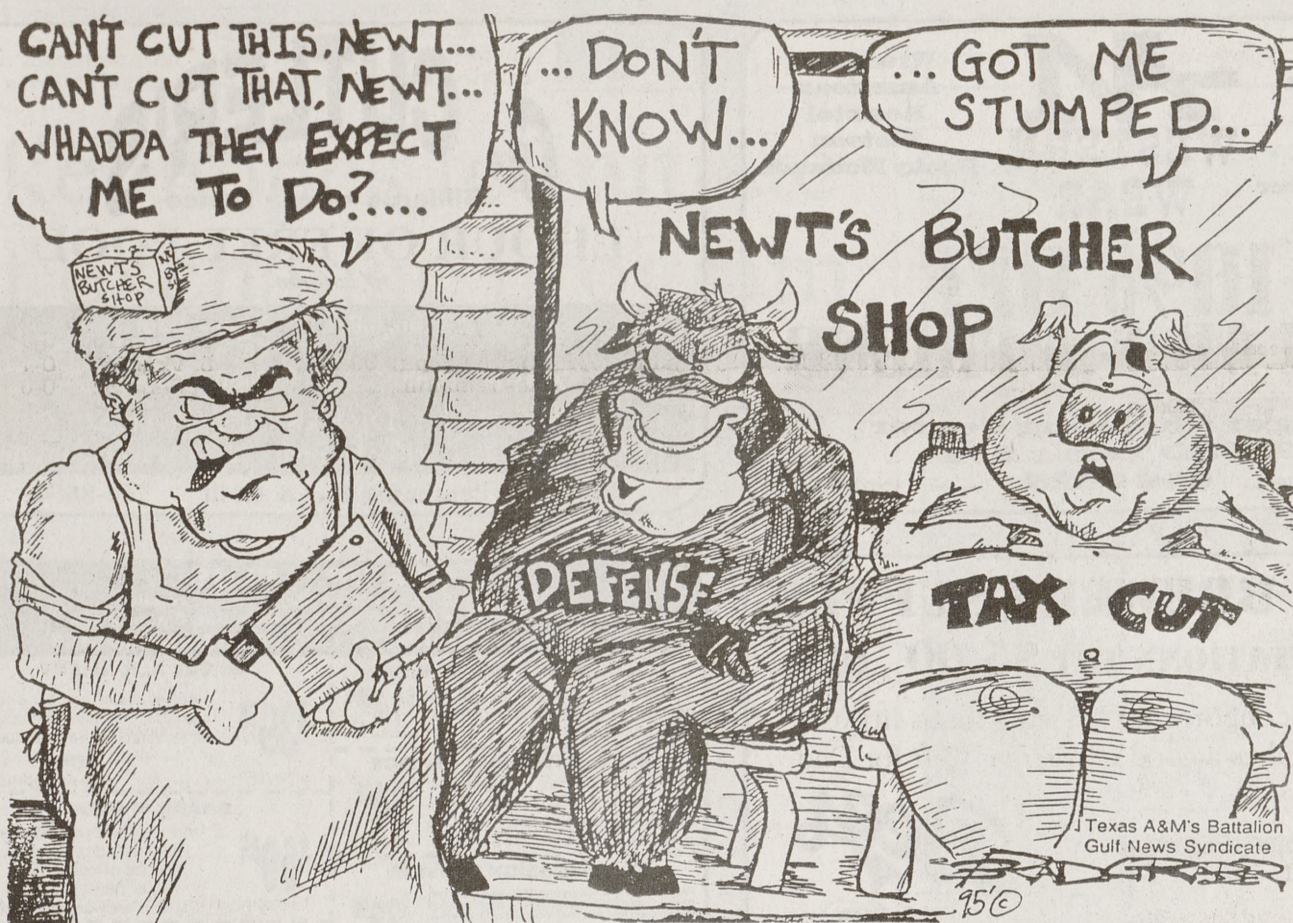
But Coach Slocum had the class and patience to set this thing up. No one said that all women don't know anything about football, but there are some that don't and I'm sure that some of those women fill our stands on Saturday.

As for the cartoon that accompanied the column, we thought it was totally tasteless to make fun of our own coach, who has done a hell of a job for the Aggie football program.

Greg Londrie
Class of '99
Mark Hodgson
Class of '99

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.

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Stress can lead to domestic violence

Smack! Julia went crashing to the floor. And there stood her boyfriend, demanding another cold beer.

This story is all too familiar to many people. Though incidents like this often occur in the home, in secret, making them sort of invisible to the rest of society and hard to identify, they do happen.

Domestic violence is a serious crime which is quite prevalent throughout the United States. Unfortunately, women more often become the target of a frustrated boyfriend or husband's inability to cope with outside pressures, though certainly, domestic violence can affect both men and women.

For example, a few weeks ago in Houston, a terrible case of domestic violence surprised the community.

A young woman from South America who was living in Houston lost both her legs after her boyfriend shot her with a shotgun.

Apparently, this man could not find employment and was upset by the fact that his girlfriend had a job and was supporting him. So, one day he demanded she stay home, and when she refused he shot her twice, once in each leg. The young woman is now a double amputee confined to a wheel chair.

Abuse related to domestic violence seems to occur more frequently and escalates in severity during stressful periods in the attacker's life. I do not mean to imply that it does not occur in the course of a typical day, because that is not the case.

However, with the end of the semester quickly approaching, many individuals may find themselves experiencing unusually high levels of stress, and therefore might be more prone to lose their tempers and

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lash out at another in an abusive way.

End of the semester stresses like waiting to work on a 15 page research paper the night before its deadline, or cramming for five 'cumulative' finals all being held on the same day.

I understand that many of us have a social life which is more important than school or a job which may seem to work us to death. However, postponing a project or studying the night before an exam may lead to feelings of being trapped and overwhelmed.

Unfortunately, when people begin to buckle under the burden of outside pressures, they usually get frustrated and angry. This desperate feeling may lead to some type of physical or emotional abuse against the nearest person.

Sadly, the abuse usually falls upon someone you care for, such as a girlfriend, boyfriend, spouse or friend.

The relationships which may be most valuable may also be most vulnerable to domestic violence caused by stress.

For example, when I was freshman there was a guy named George who lived a few doors down from my dorm room. He was a senior, working on his last semester of undergraduate coursework.

However, he enjoyed his last semester a little too much, and at the end of the term, he found himself facing three cumulative finals and a 10-page paper, completely unprepared.

George began to panic and starting attempting to work out the situation; however, he found that he had painted himself into a corner as far as his study time goes.

Lisa, George's girlfriend, had planned on helping him study for his test. However, when she arrived at his dorm, George lost

control, and he beat her black and blue.

It was sobering to realize how destructive someone could be when pushed too hard. In many cases, college students do not realize the possible dangers of the situation they have created by their procrastination, and suddenly, the required work of a semester is thrown into a week or less.

This situation creates an atmosphere in which domestic violence is a serious possibility.

People of all walks of life, including college students, should conscientiously take the time to develop methods which might aid in dealing with stress better.

College students do not realize the possible dangers of the situation they create with their procrastination ...

These strategies do not need to be elaborate psychological methods. As long as the strategy helps an individual cope with stress in a constructive way, it is most definitely worthwhile.

For instance, if you find yourself completely overwhelmed with your studies or work, step away from it and take a short walk. Or take a few deep breathes and count to one trillion, whatever it takes to relieve some of the frustration and pressure festering inside.

In other words, do whatever you need to do to prevent an unfortunate incident from occurring.

Just make sure you do not take out your frustrations on another individual, however, especially someone you care about.

Juan Hernandez is a senior psychology major