

Memories of War

Saying goodbye to father has lasting impact

As I watched the news last week, I was suddenly shaken by a brief blurb — the five-year anniversary of the beginning of the ground war in the Persian Gulf.

I shook my head to rattle out the cobwebs. Five years — could it possibly be? And now, just a 20-second blip on an otherwise slow news day.

Wars generally are big news makers, but it's an out-of-sight, out-of-mind type of news. Conflicts in Bosnia and Somalia usually get a nod of existence from those not directly affected.

And that's about it.

I suppose this is because of personal experience. Most college students haven't been directly affected by war.

But war invaded my world five years ago. I was a senior in high school when Saddam Hussein began his tirade of terror in Kuwait. At first I had no idea how much his actions would affect my own life.

Until my mother broke the news to me. My father, then an Army brigade commander at Fort Campbell, Ky., was to be deployed to the Persian Gulf along with most of the 101st Airborne Division.

The deployment was still weeks away, so the news really didn't hit me right away.

Then my father left, and it ran me over. The worst part of it was the actual goodbye. It takes on a whole new meaning when your father isn't going on a trip, but to a tormented land transformed into a battlefield. The uncertainty of it all was enough to send anyone over the edge.

Hugging my father and hearing him say, "Take care of your mother for me," was like having the weight of the world on my 17-year-old shoulders. I promised I would as I tried to choke back the bitter tears.

Watching my parents say goodbye was even worse. A strong marriage of 20 years was suddenly fragile under the turmoil of war. As my mother tried to drive away, she began clutching her chest as if she was refusing to let go of something within her. She struggled just to say, "Oh, God, I went through this 20 years ago with Vietnam and I prayed it wouldn't happen again."

Comforting her seemed necessary, but impossible. Telling her that he'd be fine was absurd because I had no idea if it was true. But I did it anyway, trying to do something — anything — to make her feel better. Although the American troops were highly trained and unquestionably the best in the world, they weren't on their own turf anymore. And whether control of oil was

ROB CLARK

COLUMNIST



the main reason the United States got involved was beside the point.

Everything was beside the point.

The pride and nobility of defending U.S. interests just didn't matter. Getting my father back did.

I didn't care if Hussein had oil spurring out of his ears. And I really didn't care anymore about the people of Kuwait. My father was in a situation of constant danger, and I was in a situation of constant fear.

The weeks passed, and my denial grew. I avoided the news and absorbed myself in the inane activities of a high school senior. There were dances and parties to think about. There was prom and college to worry about.

But there was also war.

My mother would host weekly "happy hours," during which several of her friends whose husbands were also in the war would gather as a support group and try to forget about their troubles for a while.

During one of these get-togethers, I was upstairs watching television when the program was interrupted by the news of the ground war starting.

I tried to calm myself, knowing I had to

go downstairs with this awful message for the five laughing women.

That laughter soon turned to tears as I stuttered and stammered through the news. The pain came flooding back into their consciousness while I stood there, completely helpless.

One of the women grabbed a bag of bread from our freezer and slammed it repeatedly on the floor in a fit of frustration. I slowly walked back upstairs, knowing I did the right thing, but hating to be the one to have done it.

I suppose we were lucky. The U.S. troops defeated Hussein's forces with ease, and with minimal casualties. But one casualty was far too many.

And security still was impossible — at least until I got my father back.

That day came in late spring, in a huge celebration at the air hangar where our family was reunited.

My father asked me to hold his Army helmet for him. In my hands was this object that for months had been a principal part of his protection.

He was alive and safe, and I clutched that helmet all night.

Rob Clark is a senior journalism major

Gulf War Syndrome demands responsibility

This week we celebrate the five-year anniversary of the Persian Gulf War. Americans can feel a special pride in our victory — most Americans that is.

ELAINE MEJIA

COLUMNIST



There are three main theories about what is causing this mysterious syndrome. The first theory is that Saddam Hussein used chemical warfare agents,

as he has done before, against American troops. A second explanation is that the inoculations given to the troops to protect them from such attacks are to blame. And the third reason points to smoke inhalation from Kuwaiti oil fires as the cause. Likely, it is some combination of the three.

It is only natural that we try to find out what is causing the Gulf War Syndrome, but we need to keep in mind that while we argue over where to place the blame, thousands of our service men and women are suffering.

They are suffering because they share a common experience: They all served in the Persian Gulf War.

The bottom line is that those were our people we sent off to war and we must take care of them.

The Persian Gulf War, which lasted only a matter of days and claimed few American casualties, has caused 50,000 American men and women to report that they are suffering from unexplainable chronic illnesses. And 50,000 people scattered throughout the country cannot be in acting in collusion.

This issue should concern all of us. Saddam Hussein is a fanatic with a mission and the possibility exists that we may need to fight a war with him again. So to commemorate the five-year anniversary of the Gulf War, let's make it clear to our government that it must take responsibility for the Gulf War Syndrome. That includes apologizing to, and taking care of, the victims and their families.

Elaine Mejia is a senior political science major



We should lower our standards for Bowen

A new year as well as a new semester is upon us, and that means fresh avenues and bold new goals to accomplish. I have nothing but sheer optimism for my new outlook, even though last semester proved slightly disappointing.

Last semester began with national championship hopes and fervent loyalty to the Aggie football team. It ended with three losses and an AP ranking behind t.u.

Last semester I vowed to bring my grades to that lofty plane of 4.0 but was smacked in the face with the reality of a GPR that isn't as easily divisible by two.

Perhaps the strongest inklings of my disenfranchisement with our world-class University dealt with the promise of a change in our curriculum. Ideals abounded with the proposed cultures and health courses in the Faculty and Student Senate. Would Texas A&M finally embrace an outlook of open-mindedness and awareness of our nation's inevitable necessity for cultural diversity and physical well-being?

Sadly, the answer was a big fat "no" as Texas A&M President Ray Bowen revealed a fear of change by tossing out the bills under

CHRIS MILLER

COLUMNIST



insinuations that cultural conditioning and wild fornication would result. He became obsessed with former students' donations and his own job security rather than focusing on the well-being and necessary indoctrination of over 40,000 students.

Perhaps he missed the second *Star Trek* movie and Spock's wonderful insight: "The needs of the many outweigh the needs of a few," or something to that effect. Spock may have funky looking ears, but at least his ideals aren't selfish.

So, at the turn of the new year, with cheap champagne flying through the air like vetoed bills off Bowen's desk, I began to think of what a brand new semester would bring for me. I needed new direction... achievable goals. I didn't want to tackle anything as lofty as a new curriculum because I was still emotionally wrought from the utter disappointment of the previous semester's occurrences.

Then, late one night, it struck me; I'd come up with a list of semester goals that were so trivial and insignificant that I couldn't possibly be disappointed if they didn't come to pass. So, here they are, in no particular order:

- Untie the PTTS officer who has been stuffed in my closet since I received that parking ticket last October.

- Refrain from flying into mad rage every time sister from Texas Tech calls our mascot "that collie bitch."

- Figure out what the heck this "e-mail" stuff is that everyone is talking about these days.

- Quit performing old practical joke of telling out-of-town friends to go ahead and walk on the MSC grass, then watch as they are beaten senseless by passing cadets.

- Call an unnamed Aggie quarterback and tell him it wasn't actually his fault that we lost the t.u. game. Hang up before he hears my uncontrollable laughter.

- Stop procrastinating my studying before tests. From now on I'll wait until the second-to-last minute before I begin studying.

- Join the College Republicans so I can tote my official member card with the cute picture of Mussolini on the front.

- Refrain from using new position as Battalion Opinion columnist to write humorous fluff pieces to glamorize self.

- Dr. Bowen should just try vetoing those.

Chris Miller is a sophomore English major.



MAIL CALL

Writer appears to be mistaken about Post

Once again one of The Battalion's uninformed writers has gone off and dug himself into a hole. This is in reference to Michael Landauer's column, "Get your lies, deceit and harassment right here," in yesterday's Battalion. Not only did he proceed to throw insults at my home city of Houston, he also proceeded to give the student body misinformation concerning the status of the newspaper in Houston. The Houston Post (unlike what Landauer said in his column) was bought out by the Houston Chronicle in 1995, and The Houston Post is no longer in print. The offices of the Houston Post are shut down, and the company no longer exists. Landauer needs to actually know what he is talking about before he goes on

a tirade about things which he knows little or nothing about.

Michael C. Duran
class '97

• Editor's Note — Landauer's references to The Houston Post were written as sarcasm. Also, the Hearst corporation, which owns the Chronicle, bought The Post. It was not purchased by the Chronicle itself.

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, Texas A&M University College Station, TX 77843-1111
Fax: (409) 845-2647
E-mail: Batt@tamvm1.tamu.edu

Congress is right to delegate its power

In his Jan. 18 column Shannon Halbrook misses the point entirely when he used the recently changed speed limit as an example of a drawback of a federal government downsizing. A large and powerful central government bureaucracy actually becomes an insulation against democracy. The federal congress only gave the power to set the speed limit back to the states, who in nearly every case raised

that limit as soon as they got the chance. In this case the federal government has been governing against the will of the people! If we still believe that the best form of government is self government, then we can only applaud the actions of this congress. Whether or not you like the 70 mph limit, or wish a return to 55, you can now vote on the issue, before the '94 elections, your government was deaf to your opinion.

David Brookes
Graduate Student

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.

Editorials Board

- Sterling Hayman
Editor in Chief
- Stacy Stanton
Managing Editor
- Michael Landauer
Opinion Editor
- Jason Brown
Assistant Opinion Editor

EDITORIAL

RIDDLED ROUTES

Too much traffic is making campus hectic and slowing buses

For the last couple of years, the Department of Parking, Transit and Traffic Services has entertained the idea of blocking off parts of Lubbock and Ross Streets during the day to make it easier for buses, pedestrians and bicyclists to travel through campus.

Although such a policy would inconvenience some car drivers, PTTS should try closing the streets on an experimental basis to see if the benefits would outweigh the inconveniences.

Thousands of students, faculty and staff travel on or next to these two streets during the day going to and from class, work and lunch. When those who drive through campus mingle with, drop off or pick up pedestrians, the two streets become a nightmare.

Bicyclists sometimes find themselves reverting to the sidewalks because the streets are too congested and dangerous. This, in turn, creates a potentially dangerous situation for pedestrians and cyclists.

Bus passengers do not risk bodily harm, but they do risk being late to class because buses are frequently trapped in the traffic. Consequently, they may miss valuable information in their class or possibly face the reprimand of a dis-

tracted instructor. In some cases, late assignments are not accepted and grades suffer.

Allowing shuttle buses to pass through campus without the presence of other motor vehicles could greatly improve the operations of the transit system.

Bus Operations Manager Doug Williams agreed that temporarily closing the streets might show that buses would run their routes more efficiently and quickly, even though pedestrians would continue to pose a slight problem.

Although motorists might miss the ability to go nearly anywhere on campus in their cars, the closing of certain streets would not hinder essential routes. All parking lots and garages would still be accessible.

This campus is designed to allow students to walk freely and safely to and from class, and closing the two streets would be beneficial to make it even more pedestrian-friendly.

Despite the possibility for harsh criticism, PTTS should at least give this idea a try so it may look upon it objectively before ruling it out in the future.

Besides, it is two fewer streets on which students can get parking tickets during the day.