

B-CS

Hazing

Continued from Page 1

hearing about alleged hazing involving six Fish Aides who kidnapped Toby Boenig, student body president, blindfolded him and dropped him off at the corner of Texas Avenue and George Bush Drive, all expressly prohibited by University regulations.

Boenig defended the incident last week, saying it was a tradition, he had authority over the six freshmen and could have forced them to stop.

But hazing rules state that consent is not a defense, nor is the argument that an act is a tradition.

Lanita Hanson, coordinator of Greek affairs and assistant director of the Department of Student Activities, said the tradition defense is common, especially at A&M, even though policies forbid it.

Part of the "tradition problem," Hanson said, stems from the rise of hazing after World War II, when veterans re-

turned to colleges across the nation.

The veterans brought their military rituals and traditions with them and hazing soon developed as these rites were integrated into college life.

"The problem is that those old traditions may be in violation of the current University policy. If the University prohibits something, then alumni need to realize that."

"Very few hazing incidents ever start with bad intentions. But sometimes things happen and someone gets hurt, even during an activity that they agreed to."

— Christi Moore

Student Organization Hearing Board chair

At A&M, the military nature of the University has not only provided ample grounds for hazing to take root, but also forged strong ties between current and former students.

Hanson said these strong ties to the campus make hazing a difficult problem to solve.

"So many people stay in touch with the University after they leave," she said, "and they keep those old traditions with them and pass them on with the current students."

Tyson Voelkel, Corps commander and a senior industrial engineering major, said former students do have a hand in hazing, and the Corps does realize that many of the things they suggest are against the law.

"We have some (former students) come back and say, 'Remember when we used to tie up a guy to a tree and cover him with Tar and Heel (a shoe polish)? Do you still do that?'" Voelkel said. "Then we have to say, 'No, we can't. It's against the law.'"

The traditions at A&M that reach into

the realm of hazing are not merely initiation rites associated with entering organizations. Common practices, such as making underclassman do push-ups for saying the words "butt" or "zip," words restricted for upperclassman use, are considered hazing.

The tradition of making freshman cadets "whip out," and introduce themselves to upperclassmen in the Corps, is also considered by some to be hazing.

In 1985, cadet Bruce Goodrich died after a hazing incident. The incident led to the introduction of a law with stiffer penalties for hazing in Texas, including one to two years in jail and a \$5,000 to \$10,000 fine if convicted. The law also declared that consent of the victim would not be accepted as a defense.

Christi Moore, chair of the Student Organization Hearing Board, said the consent defense clause is a vital and necessary part of the law.

"Very few hazing incidents ever start out with bad intentions," Moore said. "But sometimes things happen and someone gets hurt, even during an activity that they agreed to."

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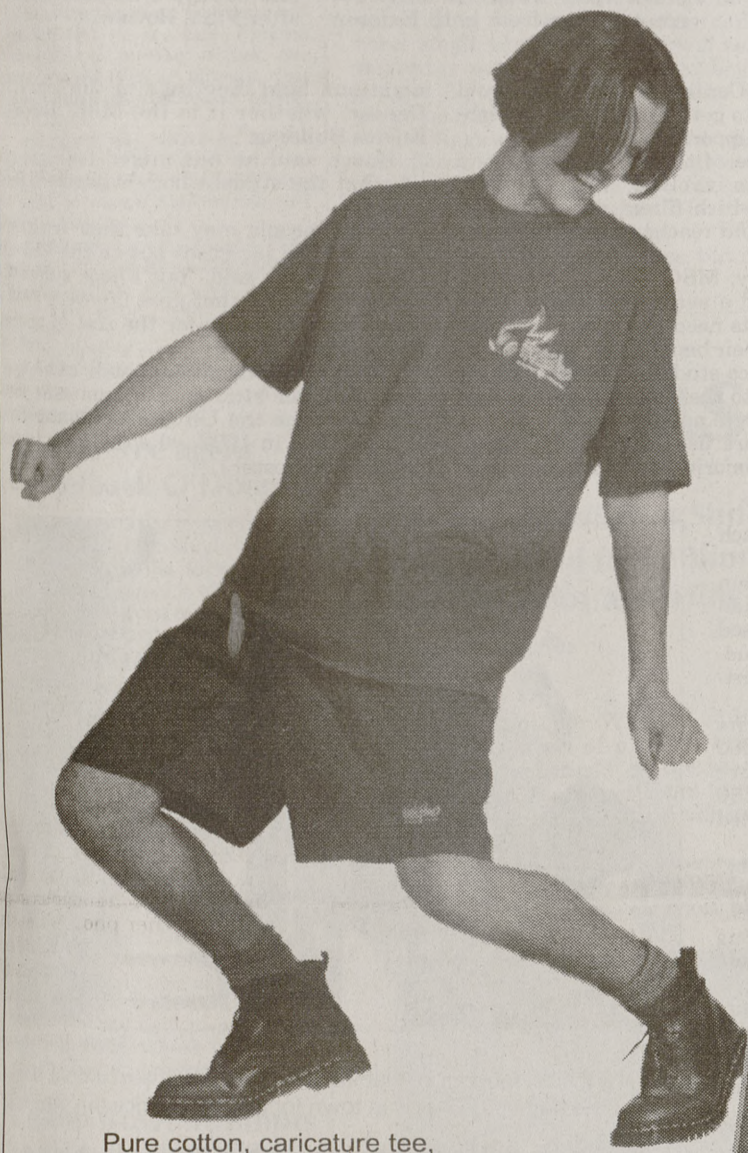
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