

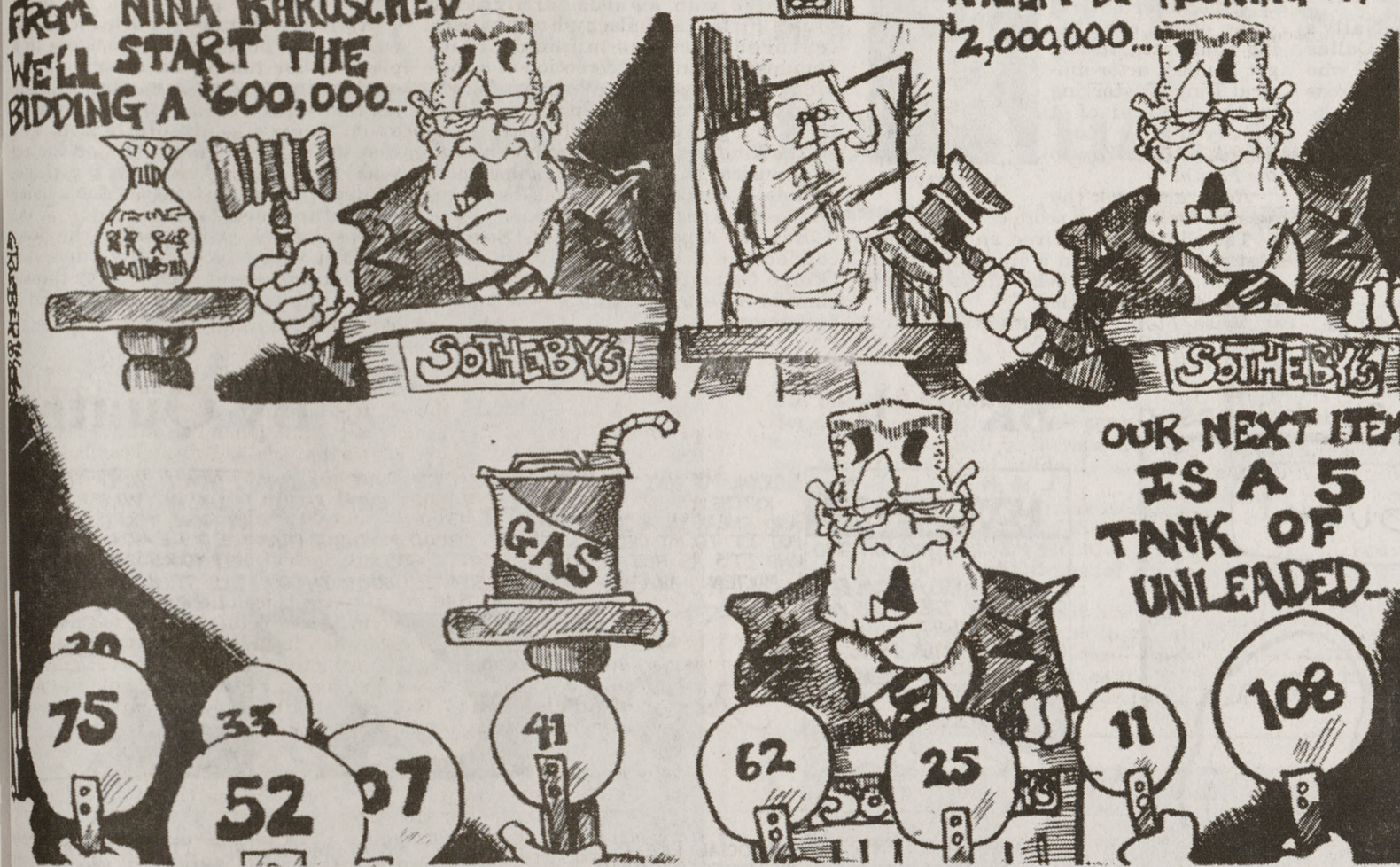
# OPINION

MONDAY  
June 3, 1996

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OUR NEXT ITEM IS A VASE GIVEN TO JACKIE KENNEDY FROM NINA KARUSCHEV. WE'LL START THE BIDDING A \$600,000...

WE'LL START THE BIDDING FOR THIS WILEM DE KOONING AT \$2,000,000...



## Aggies have many reasons to feel proud

Howdy! I hope that everyone's summer is going great. For all returning Aggies, I hope you did well on your finals. To all new Aggies who are beginning your sojourn at Texas A&M, I bid you a warm Aggie welcome and good luck.



CARL BAGGETT  
GUEST COLUMNIST

Between semesters we hopefully had the opportunity to step back in our own lives and gear up for a great summer. In this time of reflection, let's look at A&M to remember why we came here and why we are so proud to be Aggies.

Since 1876 this University has been a special place, delivering excellence in both academic and social spheres. Academically, A&M is ranked fourth in the nation for the number of new National Merit scholars. We are ranked fifth in total research expenditures, competing with schools like MIT and Stanford. For schools with permanent endowments, A&M is ranked sixth nationally. Texas A&M has two Nobel Prize-winning professors and is one of the few college campuses lucky enough to have a presidential library.

What makes A&M special and sets our institution above other

colleges is, in addition to academic excellence, we have traditions that bind and unite students.

Does any other school have an organization for moms totaling 7,000 members with 107 locations across Texas? A&M does — it is called Aggie Moms. Also, I doubt any other school cares so much about current and former students to take the time to honor those who have passed away during the past year. We do — in a ceremony called Aggie Muster. Texas A&M also constructs the world's largest bonfire each fall and has the nation's largest student-run volunteer program — Big Event each spring. A&M historically commissions more military officers than any institution (outside the service academies) through the Corps of Cadets.

These are just a few examples of what sets A&M apart from other schools across the nation. We are truly lucky to be able to attend a university such as A&M. However, I know our school is not perfect, and we are working to improve A&M for its students. It is necessary from time to time to step back and look at all the positive aspects of Aggieland. I hope that everyone has a fun summer and does well in summer school. Welcome back!

Student Body President Carl Baggett is a Class of '96 accounting major

## Bush fails in diagnosis of Texas literacy crisis

Blood pressure machines don't ever seem to work. The nurse can always tell that I'm not as cold and stiff as the instrument results suggest, though.



MARCUS GOODYEAR  
COLUMNIST

to track reading versus TV hours.

Bush's fears have produced positive results without harming anyone — except the one in four third graders who are now considered illiterate because they scored poorly on one test, on one day, under one set of emotional circumstances, with one set of motivations.

Ironically, this isn't even the worst news. In addition to the help of Boy Scouts and small-town newspapers, Bush has enlisted one more tool to confront the literacy crisis.

If the students at a school have high reading test scores (reflecting high literacy by the governor's standards) compared with the performance of students in similar schools, then the principal of the school will receive up to a \$5,000 bonus per year.

The principal receives this bonus. Not the English or reading department. Not the grossly underpaid teachers. And for goodness sakes not those dirty awful schools where the kids scored poorly.

They know that a faulty reading is the result of a faulty testing instrument.

These nurses need to have a little chat with our Gov. Bush. Last year Bush declared a literacy crisis in Texas.

The basis for Bush's announcement seems legitimate. He has called it "a catastrophe that one in four of the school children who took the TAAS reading test last year failed."

The TAAS is administered to third graders and attempts to assess literacy, mostly through reading comprehension questions.

However, Dr. John C. Stansell, an A&M reading professor, commented that he didn't know what basis the governor "could have to make that statement with any confidence."

The TAAS is certainly not sufficient to determine literacy. Stansell agrees that the TAAS is a well-constructed test. Just as the blood pressure machine is well-constructed. But both are subject to error, and unfortunately, the TAAS results aren't nearly as reliable.

Stansell explains that "no test really captures everything that a curriculum might do." A student might score well on a test but be unable to perform in the classroom.

Or, if the student lacks the terminology to answer questions, if he or she reads perfectly well but has not yet been introduced to concepts like thesis and conclusion, then the student's wrong answers will make him or her appear illiterate.

Really, the TAAS has done no harm, though. Bush and the Texas Board of Education have been acting to promote reading since April.

Boy Scouts are volunteering to teach their peers to read. The Abilene Reporter-News published a chart for parents

Marcus Goodyear is a Class of '97 English major

## Opinion page provides forum for ideas

It's amazing how a trip back to the public schools will make you appreciate how nice we have it here at A&M.



JASON BROWN  
OPINION EDITOR

Over the break, I worked as an overpaid babysitter, substitute teaching at high schools back home. Although I would occasionally try to teach a little, I was consistently thwarted by uncaring, uninterested students who worked harder to resist learning than it would take to further their knowledge the least bit.

Fortunately, A&M, as a quality institution of higher learning, is a place where people of all walks of life voluntarily come to pursue intellectual interests for the benefit of themselves and others. A product of these pursuits is lively debate on a wide range of issues, and it is character-

ized best right here on The Battalion Opinion page.

The Opinion page is not a sinister publication, pushing forth a secret agenda to undermine all that is good at the University. In fact, it showcases what is best about Texas A&M: the ability of Aggies to rationally discuss important issues of the day and educate others about them.

Here's a quick lesson on what we do and how we do it (please indulge me; this lets me do more teaching than I did in the whole two weeks at Fort Bend ISD).

First, columns compose the majority of the page. The opinions they express are not necessarily anyone else's but the columnists'.

Editorials reflect the view of the Editorials Board. They can be seen as the viewpoint of The Battalion, which doesn't necessarily mean the viewpoint of each staff member.

As always, there's Mail Call, which is the most important part of the page. It gives everyone at A&M a chance to be heard on any issue.

Whether the letter is an assault on a columnist's misguided opinion or a response to a campus event, it's welcome on the Opinion page. No one at the Batt claims to be above criticism, so we enjoy responses to anything we've written. As a matter of fact, we're interested in hearing what others think of just about anything.

To make Mail Call most effective, we have to play by a few rules. First, letters should be less than 300 words; the shorter it is, the more likely it will run. Also, we treat all material on the page equally when it comes to editing. We work with limited space, we observe stylistic rules, and we want arguments expressed as clearly as possible. So, we reserve the right to edit for length, style, grammar, content and accuracy. This means that we might make minor changes in a column, editorial or letter — nothing more.

If you have a letter, bring it by 013 Reed McDonald or E-mail us at Batt@tamvm1.tamu.edu. Make sure it includes your Social

Security number, class and phone number.

Some issues, though, will not fit in the confines of a letter. That's what guest columns are for. We welcome these, too, but it's a good idea to call me at 845-3314 to discuss the idea before writing it so that it will be appropriate for the page.

Those of us working at the Batt appreciate the role the newspaper has here on campus. It's the most feasible way a person can reach thousands of others at once. Furthermore, it enables a large community of intellectuals to discuss practically any issue.

After spending two weeks with kids who were at times too lazy to say "here" during roll call, I am more motivated than ever to oversee a discussion of people interested in the world in which they live. I promise to take advantage of this opportunity and respect all the voices of the campus.

I hope everyone else will, too.

Jason Brown is a Class of '96 economics major

