

OPINION

WEDNESDAY
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Provisional students run wild at A&M

The other day, I was sitting in my dorm room when a young lady I had never seen before suddenly barged in and demanded to know who I was.

"Well, the sign on the door says David Boldt," I said.

"Oh, well, this guy I know, his name is David and I thought he lived here but, like, you're not him. ... What is that wooden thing?" she asked.

"That would be a loft. It saves space," I explained.

"Oh wow, that's cool. See, I'm new in town (no, really?) and I've never seen anything like that."

As she left, my roommate and I looked at each other, and without hesitation said simultaneously, "Provie!"

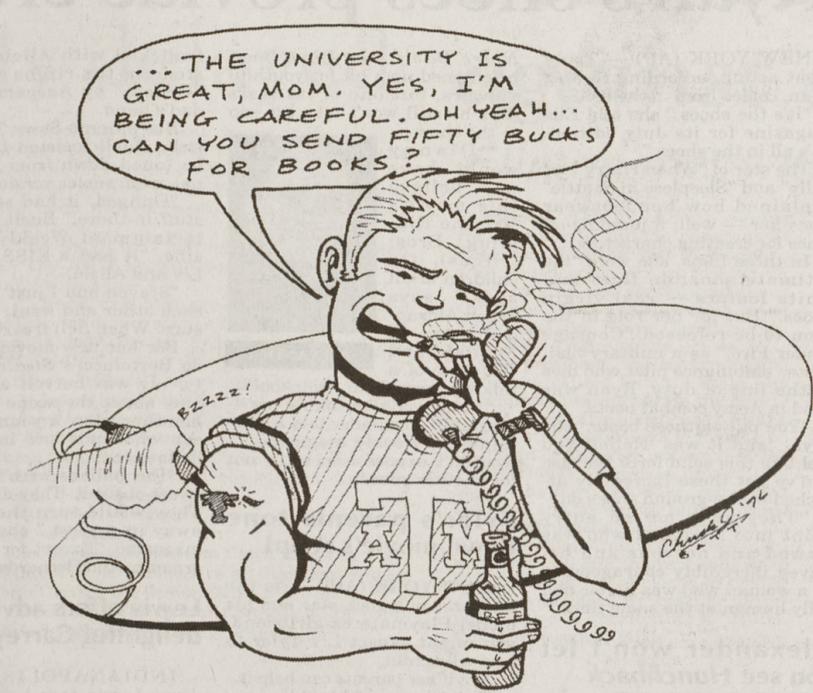
What is a provie? A special breed of student, better known as a provisional student, that appears on this campus when the temperature reaches 97 degrees.

The provisional student program is actually a very beneficial program. A lot of good students I know would not have had the chance to be Aggies if it were not for this opportunity. The 230 students here this summer are probably good enough students to succeed academically at A&M, and the administrators who run this program are also fully competent.

What intrigues me is the behavior of these people that makes them so easy to spot in a crowd, a huge lecture hall or anywhere else on campus. I want to know why these people party more days a week than this paper runs, and why a high percentage of them seem to be, well, "morally challenged."

My first contact with this strange species of Aggie came in the summer of '95 when I took Political Science 206. These young, confused-looking students kept asking people next to them questions like "What's a syllabus?" and "Where's the academic building?" Others just seemed to sit there looking clueless.

Then, I saw these same people out at the Chicken, J.D. Well's and Harry's every night I went out. After getting to know some of them, I discovered they were going out two or three nights in addition to that, and, despite being underage, they were drinking like fish (sorry, I couldn't resist). These people party harder



than I did on my 21st birthday.

And as far as being "morally challenged," let's just say to all the good little provies out there that there are a lot of your kind making you look bad.

So what's the meaning of this mass hysteria? Why are these provisional students so naive and so crazy?

First of all, these people come to college about two or three weeks after graduating from high school. The grip of parental supervision and high school rules is suddenly lifted and, like a wild monkey let out of its cage after 18 years, they go bananas, prompting statements like: "Party hard man, we're in college!"; "Wow, nice Aggie ring, will you buy me some beer?"; and "Who cares if we have class tomorrow, we're in college, dude." Besides, they only have to make a 2.0 to stick around, so why shouldn't they spend most of

their time partying?

Next, remember that these people have not been to Fish Camp, Corps Freshman Orientation Week, or any other type of Aggie orientation, which would explain their naivete.

Last but not least, we have to remember that these people are 17 and 18 years old. Immaturity is expected.

So maybe we shouldn't be so hard on them; after all, most of them probably can't help it. This behavior is only natural for recent high school grads, right?

To all you provies out there — go ahead, live it up while your classes are easy. And don't worry, you won't be clueless and immature forever. Experience breeds wisdom, so be patient.

David Boldt is a Class of '97 marketing major

Capitalism kept on life support in Russia

Hold on just a minute. It's not time to start building nuclear fallout shelters. The Communists haven't taken Russia back — yet.

One thing is clear, though. President Boris Yeltsin and his little box of democratic reforms are in trouble. Big trouble.

This past Sunday, the Russian people were given their first opportunity to democratically elect a new president.

But instead of embracing Yeltsin and his reforms, a large portion of the public threw their support to Gennadi Zyuganov and seven other candidates. Even "Gorby," our favorite former Soviet leader, was running. (He only got 1 percent of the vote.)

So who is this Zyuganov guy? And why did so many people vote for him?

Well, he's the leader of what's left of Russia's Communist Party. And his campaign promises include things like crushing capitalism in Russia, rebuilding the Red Army and resurrecting the old Soviet Union.

Lenin and Stalin must be grinning in their graves.

In short, Zyuganov sees the West and everything it stands for as one great big evil thing that didn't deserve to win the Cold War. With that in mind, he doesn't have a problem with closing the Iron Curtain once again.

This is scary because Russia still has over 20,000 nuclear warheads at its disposal.

But Zyuganov doesn't exactly sound like an appealing presidential candidate — unless you're in Russia.

To say the least, the Russian people have been through the worst of everything. For the past 1,000 years, all they have known are czarist autocracy and Soviet totalitarianism.

Then, the whole boat sank after a failed coup in 1991. So now they are trying out democracy and a free-market economy under the leadership of the ex-Communist Yeltsin.

To us, that sounds great. But not all Russians have fared so well under the reforms. A growing number are becoming disenfranchised with democracy.

Some members of the older generations are eager for a return to the law and order of the Soviet regimes. They see Yeltsin's reforms as chaotic.

And many want to see Rus-

sia return to its former superpower status as a major world military force.

Millions of workers have not received a paycheck in months. Some have been faced with unemployment for the first time ever. Others have seen their life savings devastated by stratospheric inflation.

I suppose freedom of speech doesn't mean much when you can't afford a loaf of bread (or a bottle of vodka).

Let's just say democracy hasn't been friendly to everyone in the crowd.

As a result, 32 percent of voters cast their ballots for Zyuganov.

Yeltsin only managed to get 35 percent. His supporters tend to be the religious, the young and those prospering in the free-market reforms.

It's not surprising that even the leader of Russia's 96 million Orthodox Christians, Patriarch Aleksii III, gave an unofficial endorsement to Yeltsin. The Russian Orthodox Church justifiably fears a return to the days of persecution under Communist rule.

But it wasn't enough for the vodka-loving president to win 50 percent of the vote.

Now there will be a run-off election in July between the top two candidates. For Russia, this means a race between moving forward into the future or falling back into the past.

And let me tell you, Russia's past ain't pretty.

But at least the Russian people can now choose the direction their country takes. It's a choice they've never had before.

We can only pray that Russia buries its hammer and sickle once and for all and reelects Yeltsin.

Some Russian hard-liners have other plans, though. They've spent the last few weeks marching through the streets of Moscow with old Soviet flags and Bolshevik banners. After seeing this, I was fearful that Zyuganov, the "dedicated Communist," might have the momentum to win.

But after hearing countless interviews with ordinary Russians and looking at Sunday's preliminary election results, I'm going to go out on a limb and predict that Yeltsin will be re-elected in July.

I may have to eat my words. But if I'm right, you heard it here first. OK?

If I'm wrong, look for me out back behind the Batt office in Reed McDonald. I'll be the one in the tinfoil radiation suit building my nuclear fallout shelter.

Michael Heinroth is a Class of '96 political science major

Hangtag abuse inconveniences the needy

We get to campus at least 30 minutes early and sit like vultures — waiting and waiting for someone to relinquish a parking place. Finally we find a spot, but it's so far away we need a map to find our class.

When we're almost at the building, we notice our good buddy Dick's car parked in the reserved for handicapped parking spot. We grimace, thinking, "Last I checked, he was holding up just fine from his girlfriend's breakup, besides a paper cut or two."

By the time we get inside, we're 10 minutes late, sweating profusely, and disrupt our prof's lecture. We slump into our seat and think, "It sure would be nice if there were more parking spots closer than B.F.E."



GINA PANZICA
COPY EDITOR

So what about those handicapped hangtags? We've all seen them hanging from the rearview mirror of one of our friend's cars. The first thing that pops to mind is, "Hey, he doesn't need one of those. Where can I get one?"

It is obvious that the abuse of the blue handicapped hangtags has become prevalent, particularly on the A&M campus. It is not fair to those who physically require the use of such hangtags to have a difficult time parking and therefore traveling across campus because of this abuse. Since acquiring such a tag simply requires an application, a doctor's signature and five dollars, no wonder student abuse of them is on the rise.

People must be buying and trading these hangtags like they are Aggie football tickets. What about the Aggie Code of Honor, which we are constantly reminded of? "Aggies do not lie, cheat or steal, nor tolerate those who do." Is it presumptuous to say that people are lying about their physical

needs, cheating someone out of a parking spot and stealing away the rights of those who deserve the privilege?

Sorry if I sound bitter. I have become accustomed to driving around parking lots in search of two adjacent parking places so my sister can use her wheelchair lift to get out of our van. She requires the use of such a hangtag because she is legally blind and has severe physical handicaps.

I'd like to think it is a simple ignorance issue. Surely people would not intentionally take advantage of a convenient situation. Just because they are on crutches for two weeks does not give them the right to occupy handicapped spaces for two years.

So Dick, when exactly do you expect those paper cuts to be healing — or am I going to be forced to give you a real reason to use that hangtag?

Gina Panzica is a Class of '97 journalism major



MAIL CALL

Deadbeat Patrol harps on dead issue

I am writing in regard to the stories run on Victor Morales in the June 17 issue of The Battalion, and I would like to question the credibility of the "Deadbeat Patrol."

When one considers that the issue the group keeps hounding Morales about is essentially a null issue, it loses its credibility. The issue concerns a grant received by Morales' wife. The Morales family thought, and was given assurance, that the issue had been resolved 13 years ago. They were contacted that it had not been resolved and Morales proceeded to take care of it a second time.

Throughout the whole affair, Morales has stood by his wife. A College Republican and Gramm supporter remarked to me about the "Deadbeat Patrol," saying that "the campaign should be concerned only with the issues and policies that affect Texans and not an extraneous issue that has been

settled." Aggies, of all people, should carry themselves with integrity. Aggies should not lower themselves to dishonorable and undignified acts. There is no honor or dignity in hounding a man so persistently and vehemently about something that is nonexistent and meaningless. I just hope that the Aggies who are participating understand what a farce they are involved with.

Ryan C. Runkle
Class of '98

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. A valid student ID is required. Letters may also be mailed to:

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