

OPINION

WEDNESDAY
June 26, 1996

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B-CS inaction keeps concerts away

I feel like Charlie Brown. Lucy holds a football in the shape of a major local concert, and my excitement builds. Forgetting all the times I have been fooled before, I run after it — only to have it yanked away, leaving me flat on my back, desperately hoping the next concert in College Station doesn't consider line dancing a valid opening act.

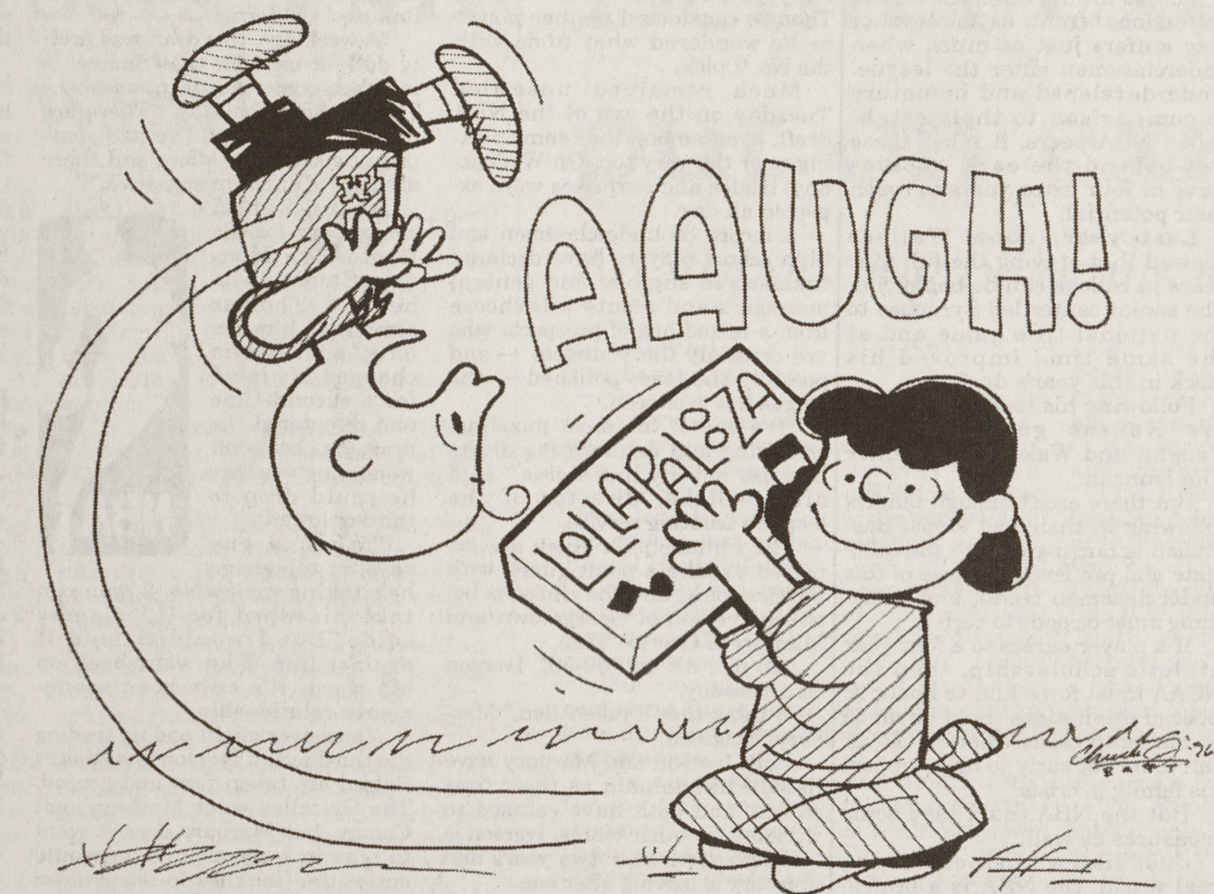


STEVEN GYESZLY
COLUMNIST

Much has been said about the recent cancellation of Lollapalooza at the Texas World Speedway. Unfortunately, the history of most major rock concerts in College Station all ends up the same way: the way to the Woodlands Pavilion or the Astrodome.

For those who enjoy them, College Station is considered a magnet for top country acts. Indeed, as one promoter said, "The only way not to draw a large crowd to a country act in College Station is by refusing to sell beer." As surprising as it may seem, however, there is quite a large population of us that refuse to sing along with Garth Brooks. And for those of us who don't keep our TV glued to TNN, there is a better chance of finding a nearby on-campus parking spot than a local concert by a band we can appreciate.

Historically, the bands that have played here under the guise of a "major concert" have been pretty grim. No one can forget (no matter how hard they try) Adam Ant and Robert Palmer, who both played here in the '80s. The Gin Blossoms concert a few years back does not count either. They were here only as a last minute opening to Toad the Wet Sprocket, a band known more for creativity in its name than its music. And people who actually attempt to bring up the Frank Black fiasco deserve severe punishment — but the fact that they probably went



to the show is painful enough.

The only thing sadder than the bands who have played here is the list of bands that were supposed to and canceled. Nine Inch Nails, Matthew Sweet and the Cranberries are just a few of the bands that were willing to play in College Station but had their deals fall through. Unfortunately, those of us driving 100 miles out of town to see these and other acts are also left to question why.

One of the most common excuses is the lack of audience support, and people often point to the Sponge concert as an example. Granted, the attendance was a bit sparse, but the blame should fall on inclement weather, confusion among promoters and a poor choice of bands. Bring in a non-country band

that most people actually enjoy and they will come. Just ask those already waiting in line for the next Jackopierce concert.

Another excuse is that many bands aren't willing to play a market such as College Station. However, if Willie can book numerous top-notch regional acts to 3rd Floor Cantina and Dixie Theatre, then why can't the powers-that-be bring a bigger act to a larger local venue? One road manager of a major band that is currently on tour in Texas said, "We'd love to come to College Station because we see it as an untapped region. But if no local agent or promoter asks us, we're not going to go out of our way."

Great. While local officials and promoters are busy booking Otis Day and the Knights, the only way to

listen to our favorite bands in concert is by ordering their live CDs through BMG.

College Station will never become heir apparent to Woodstock or Glastonbury. And no matter how much I pray, Depeche Mode or Morrissey will never consider Wolf Pen Creek as a destination on their U.S. tour. But there are numerous major acts that will choose College Station over Ferris, Texas, if only local promoters and officials will book them.

No one wants to feel like Charlie Brown, and I hate to accuse anyone of being Lucy. But if more bands don't start coming to College Station, the next time that football is held up, I'll be aiming for something else.

Steven Gyeszly is a Class of '99 finance and sociology major

Church burnings break body, not soul

Burning a church will never break the faithful.



ALEX WALTERS
GUEST COLUMNIST

A righteous church is more than just an architectural painting of mortar, concrete and lumber — it is people brought together by common threads of faith and hope.

The fools who think they can squelch faith by burning a building are just reaching for power they will never have.

The people who have been burned out know God can use the weak. Those who are burning churches think they are really hurting someone because they are black or because they are Christian. Because of those very reasons, the only thing that is being hurt is the building. The faith that built those churches is the same faith that will rebuild them.

Persecution and oppression are constant. Chains of iron, however, can never bind the soul. During the dark age of slavery in this country, the slave was among the most righteous, the most humble, and the most faithful. The fact that a slave could rarely go to a white church made no difference. The fields and the clapboard-shack slave quarters served God much better than sanctuaries of marble and glass.

The issue is not how horrible it is that churches are being burned. The issue is not even that the churches are made up of black congregations. A burning church is just a symptom of a sick nation.

Anyone can see arson and

violence as nothing but pitiful hate, but the real problem is the moral sloth that has crept into our society so slowly that few have seen it.

Thirty-three churches in 18 months have burned to the ground, but nobody noticed until recently.

What does this ignorance say about the spirit of our country? If houses of worship are being destroyed, most likely for racist motives, everyone — Christians and non-Christians alike — should take a stand and refuse to be enslaved.

If a church with a black congregation burns by arson in South Carolina, that's sad, but it's still in South Carolina.

If a black church burns in north Texas, that's a bit different, but it's still just a black church.

This complacency will eventually destroy this nation, and political rhetoric won't help.

If people want to really do something, there is burn nothing to do about it but begin again.

The only words I can offer to help with that are the words I wrote when I drove by a partially demolished church about two years ago. The roof had caved in, but the image was beautiful because the steeple still pointed upwards. It seems to make more sense now.

The Church I want has a broken back but its crucifix remains within the stars ... if only we could hold a funeral party and in its wake ... the timid in their wonderful slumber churches are but lumber.

Alex Walters is a Class of '97 journalism and theater arts major

False accusation against Catholic priest pays off in Louisiana

Child rapist." These were the words used by Assistant Terrebonne Parish Prosecutor Mark Rhodes to describe Father Robert Melancon.



MICHAEL HEINROTH
COLUMNIST

After less than two hours in deliberation, a jury in Houma, La. (60 miles southwest of New Orleans), convicted the Roman Catholic priest of aggravated rape. The conviction mandates life in prison with no parole.

But hopefully, an appeals court will overturn the verdict and free Father Melancon.

Why? Because after speaking with both the prosecuting and defense attorneys, I am convinced that the 60-year-old priest is innocent.

The accuser, Kevin Portier, 19, says Father Melancon forced him to have intercourse in the Annunziata Catholic Church rectory. The teenager originally said the encounters took place over a five-and-a-half-year peri-

od between 1985 and 1991 while he was an altar boy.

So let's burn Father Melancon at the stake. Right?

Well, there are a few problems. Especially with Kevin's testimony.

First, the young accuser's story isn't consistent.

On a church trip, he "confided" to a friend, Terri Campbell, that Melancon's successor at Annunziata, Father Morrison, was the molester.

Kevin later decided it was Father Melancon.

The teenager also has a problem recalling the frequency of the encounters at the church rectory.

In a previous civil trial, Kevin received an \$800,000 settlement from the Roman Catholic Diocese of Houma-Thibodaux. He said Father Melancon forced him to have intercourse two and three times a month over the five-and-a-half-year period.

During the recent criminal trial, though, Kevin could only "remember" two encounters.

That's a big difference. And money seems to be the source of Kevin's inconsistencies.

According to George Simno, one of Father Melancon's defense attorneys, Kevin Portier showed "no emotion at all" on the stand. He stared blankly and recited the alleged events without a tear.

Now whether the rapes occurred three times a month for five-and-a-half years or only twice, I imagine the events would conjure up some type of emotional response.

At any rate, the prosecution managed to ignore these problems and obtained the judge's approval to call Ronald Folse, 34, to the stand. Folse had brought a civil suit against the diocese in 1993 and received a \$30,000 settlement. He had decided that he too had been a victim of Father Melancon as a youth.

Folse's credibility and relevance are lacking, though. He was not a witness to the alleged events surrounding Kevin Portier's accusations.

And Folse never even bothered coming forward with his own story until his attorney convinced him that a monetary settlement was in their future.

Once again, money looked to be the motivating factor.

Ironically, the prosecution raised the issue of money to "discredit" one of the defense's key witnesses.

Remember when Kevin told his friend Terri that Father Morrison and not Father Melancon had assaulted him?

Well, it turns out Terri and her family had moved to South Carolina. So, the defense had to pay for her flight to the trial. The defense was also responsible for her hotel expenses. And they bought her a dress to wear to the trial.

These actions were hardly irregular. In fact, they were essential because Terri Campbell stepped off the plane with little money and no appropriate clothing to wear to the trial.

But prosecutor Mark Rhodes claimed the defense had, in effect, "bought a witness."

He also claimed the jury "didn't buy her testimony."

But at least one of the 12 jurors did and refused to vote for a conviction of aggravated rape. Unfortunately, Louisiana law only requires 10 jurors to vote for a conviction in a case such as this.

But what about the accused and now-convicted Father Melancon?

Well, he maintained his innocence throughout the trial. And he continues to do so, despite the fact that he is now faced with life in prison.

His defense attorneys are currently working on his appeal, though.

And I hope they win and Father Melancon is set free.

Put simply, there are just too many questions surrounding Kevin Portier's failure to present a consistent story from the civil to the criminal trial. And Robert Folse's credibility and relevance are questionable.

But this case is only one of an increasing number involving priests accused of molestation.

The Roman Catholic Church is an easy target because of its vast resources. And for those with no conscience, phony accusations often result in profitable returns.

We are living in a time when nothing is sacred, and any wild accusation is accepted as Gospel truth.

As a result, an innocent man may spend the rest of his life in prison.

Michael Heinroth is a Class of '96 political science major



Freako label belongs only to the intolerant

This is just a quick response to Kevin Harbuck's letter from the June 24 issue of The Batt. First of all, let me say that this whole thing has gotten blown entirely out of proportion. What happened to just being Aggies?

The other point I'd like to make is directed towards Harbuck. I drink Coca-Cola. I like to dance. I learned to drive in a Chevy one-ton four-on-the-floor. And I am one of those 2 percent of this school he would probably classify as a freako.

Why am I here? Because Texas A&M happens to be a damn fine institution of higher

learning that also happens to boasts a wide variety of people and cultures (and no, I'm not talking about race).

Harbuck, on the other hand, seems to think that going to college is about staying with your own kind. Well, the rest of the world isn't conservative, country dancin', Coca-Cola drinkin' or Chevy truck drivin'. Someday when he grows up, he'll be dealing with us "freakos," and his attitude is going to get him nowhere really fast.

Sarah Hughes
Class of '97

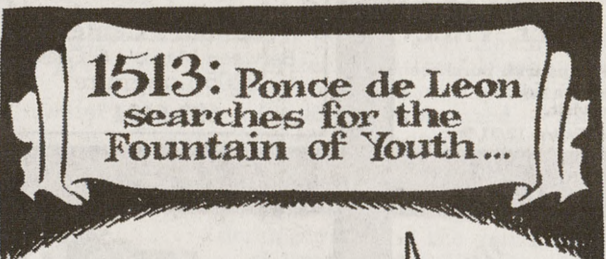
Someone needs to remind Kevin Harbuck, along with "Al-

lison and all the other freshmen" he singled out, that the purpose of college is to prepare people for the "real world." Must I remind him that the "real world" does not consist of only conservative, country dancin', Chevy-truck-drivin' Ags? I don't drive a Chevy truck nor do I really prefer country dancing, so does that mean I'm a "freako" who needs to go to t.u.? Not even close!

We are going to be faced with a lot of different people when we get out of here, so there's no better time to learn to deal with it than now. One day that guy you called a freako, maybe Ag or even t-sip (sssss!), may be your boss. What are you going to call him then?

Stephanie Feagin
Class of '97

Editor's note: Although the editor cannot distinguish between freakos and nonfreakos, he feels strongly that all Aggies should use both straps on their backpacks.



1996: Bob Dole finds it.

