

OPINION

TUESDAY
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To most, regents remain a mystery

According to Webster's College Dictionary, a regent is "a person who exercises the ruling power in a kingdom." The kingdom of A&M is ruled by nine of them.



MARCUS GOODYEAR
COLUMNIST

Students hear about their rulings all the time. We hear about the disapproved Center for Humanities, the endorsed big screens for Kyle Field and even the embarrassing "cups and ice" fiasco. But no one ever seems to remember voting these rulers into office.

Chairman of the Board of Regents Mary Nan West wasn't sandwiched between Toby Boenig and "Rip" Torn on the election ballot. Neither were Frederick McClure, Alison Brisco or M. Guadalupe L. Rangel.

You didn't vote for any of these people. I didn't vote for any of these people. Gov. George W. Bush and former Gov. Ann Richards offered each of them the holy opportunity of ruling Aggieland. Now, they are our regents — for better or for worse, in sickness and in health.

New regents are appointed by the governor on odd years and in cycles of three. Then, similar to U.S. senators, they serve a six-year term. Unlike a U.S. senator, however, the regents don't get paid.

In 1997, the terms of Alison Brisco, Royce E. Wisenbaker and Mary Nan West will end. Each of them was appointed by Richards in 1991.

Brisco is an investment banker from

Houston. Aside from her job as a regent, she was appointed to the Southern African Enterprise Development Fund Board by President Clinton.

Wisenbaker, serving his third term on the board, is an oil and gas producer. He graduated from A&M in 1939 and was instrumental in creating the President's Endowed Scholarship Program.

West is the chairman of the Board. She is a rancher described by Assistant Secretary Thelma Eisenhart as "extremely honest."

Richards appointed three more regents in 1993. John Lindsey is a Houston-based insurance agent and Class of '44. T. Michael O'Connor is a rancher from Victoria, Texas, and Class of '77. M. Guadalupe L. Rangel is an educator and writer. She is one of only three women on the board.

Bush for some reason has failed to follow Richards' example of appointing females. In 1995 he appointed three men.

Robert H. Allen, Class of '50, manages an investing firm. Frederick D. McClure, Class of '76, has been an assistant to both Presidents Bush and Reagan. Finally, Donald E. Powell is president and CEO of a bank in Amarillo.

Nine people with big, powerful jobs, nine "real" adults who don't have to take tests or live in an 8-by-8-foot space with three other guys, nine recipients of political patronage control the direction of this University.

We must be doomed. A medieval aristocracy sits behind closed doors and decides our future. At the recent Board meeting in late May, the regents considered important stuff like

the Center for Humanities, dorm cable TV, Kyle Field's large-screen video display system, the West Campus parking garage and yet another recreational sports project to develop a polo field next to the Reed Arena.

All of these decisions affected us, the students of Texas A&M. We are excluded from the selection of the Board by law. But we are only excluded from influencing decisions of the Board by our own ignorance and apathy. All board meetings are open to students, but few ever actually attend.

If we continue to remain aloof and help sustain what Eisenhart calls "the two separate worlds" of the students and the regents, the University will continue to lose opportunities like the Center for Humanities.

We need to lobby the regents like we would lobby our senators and representatives.

According to Eisenhart, most of the regents are available before Board meetings during informal receptions.

Write to them. Call them. Meet them and shake their hands. The regents are busy people. They are rich and busy and unable or unwilling to bridge the gap between their royalty and our unconcern.

We need to remind them whom they serve. We need to remind them what our interests are. We need to remind them that their decisions affect our fees.

If we don't talk to the regents and tell them what we need, they won't know how to serve us.

Marcus Goodyear is a Class of '97 English major

THE BATTALION

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EDITORIAL

MOVING FORWARD

The Citadel and VMI cases reveal the progress A&M and the Corps have made.

The Supreme Court ruled Monday that state-funded, single-sex military institutions such as The Citadel and the Virginia Military Institute (VMI) should admit women or lose their funding.

Many involved with all-male academies who believe women will somehow spoil their institutions or ruin their traditions should rest assured their fears are unfounded. And for proof, they only need to look as far as the Texas A&M Corps of Cadets.

Women were first admitted to the Corps in 1974. Many objected to the decision, but women immediately began performing their duties with a proficiency equal to or surpassing that of their male counterparts.

Now, 22 years later, women have

ascended to practically all positions of leadership. In fact, Cynthia Erickson serves as the deputy Corps commander, making her the second woman to hold the second-highest student position in the Corps.

Aggies should reflect on the foresight A&M administrators showed in spotting a positive future trend many years ago, without waiting for a court decision. And the Corps itself should also be recognized for accepting males and females to be leaders at this University and the world beyond it.

Rather than protesting the high court's decision, VMI and The Citadel should follow A&M's example, welcome women to their ranks and recognize this change as a positive step.

B-CS lacks initiative to improve

Next stop on the Bryan-College Station Historical/Cultural Bus Tour is Post Oak Mall.



STEVEN GYESZLY
COLUMNIST

Farfetched? Maybe. But not just because the only public transportation the city offers looks like some green bastardized version of the street car on a Rice-A-Roni box. There is no historical or cultural tour because there isn't much to show.

A tour of historic or cultural areas may not hit as close to home as the fact that there aren't any more ice cubes left in the ice tray, but the problem is more personal than one would think. What happens when guests come to visit and want to "see the town"? Give them the usual tour around the University, drive them by Northgate and then what? As nifty as the roommate's pyramid-of-beer-cans-from-parties-past is, it still doesn't exactly qualify as one of the wonders of the modern world.

To get a sense of just how ingrained the problem is, drive down Texas Avenue, considered by many to be the Main Street of the Twin Cities. Starting with the class that emanates from the EZ Travel Lodge, down to the ever-so-tasteful Adult Video, the only things truly worth noticing are

the orange barrels that have blocked off yet another lane. Of course, going into Bryan isn't any better. Between the numerous car dealerships and the ghost town better known as Manor East Mall, even the red lights aren't worth stopping for.

But if one can get past the anonymous architecture of countless strip malls and the harsh neon lights of competing gas stations, there just might be a few areas that do actually have the potential of both cultural and historical importance. Yet, neither city actually promotes them, leaving them languishing behind cultural landmarks such as the bumper cars at the new Mr. Gatti's.

Ironically, the city governments of both Bryan and College Station have an entire department for their respective town landfills, but neither city even has a listed phone number for historical and cultural attractions. And though they may be some of the most beautiful landfills in the state of Texas, they aren't exactly worth a mention in Fodor's. Of course, even if there were a historical/cultural attraction department, with the lack of areas to work with, the employees would probably make the Maytag repairman look like a workaholic.

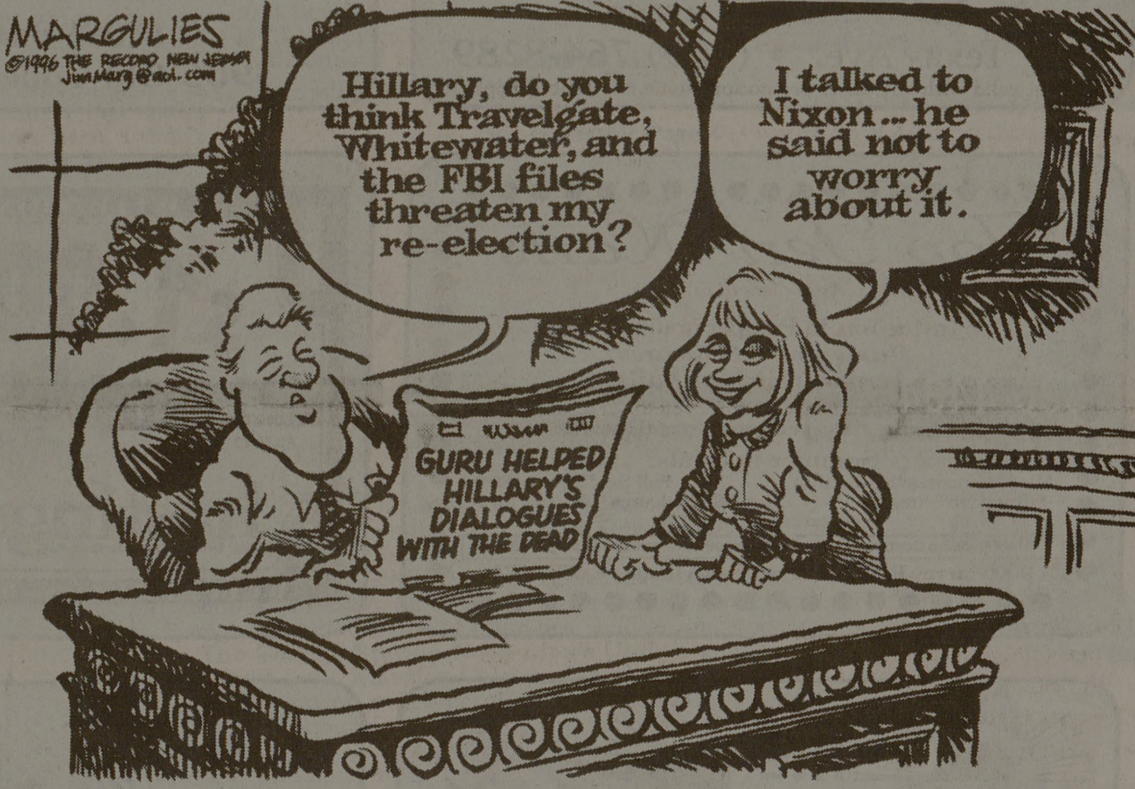
In some cases, local civic organizations have attempted to pick up the slack. Groups as varied as Brazos Beautiful and the Downtown Bryan Association are all attempting to

change Bryan-College Station in some small way. And though their contribution may be as trivial as redesigning a flower-bed, planting three petunias and a rosebush is still more visible than what municipal authorities have done so far.

Fortunately, city officials can still make up for past inaction. There are numerous areas that could use actual and extensive renovation. Of course, by renovation, I don't mean tearing up the streets, disrupting everything and then merely putting in pseudo-brick crosswalks. Downtown Bryan, the neighborhoods around Bryson Park and some of the turn-of-the-century homes that dot the back streets of Bryan are all areas that could be made more attractive, if either city government would only help refurbish them to something resembling former glory.

Certainly, restoring these places would cost the city money that might go to worthwhile projects such as paying for an outside consultant to tell us in technical terms just how ugly the city is. However, any cost incurred will certainly be cheaper than paying someone to come up with a reason to visit Bryan-College Station for more than a day. In the meantime, sign me up for the bus tour, because I've gotta go return something at the mall.

Steven Gyeszly is a Class of '97 finance and sociology major



U.S. foreign policy needs direction

I know who's responsible for the terrorist attack in Saudi Arabia.



STEPHEN LLANO
COLUMNIST

The news media continue to babble about "fundamentalist Muslim terrorists" being responsible. Although they may have been the ones who parked the truck next to the building housing U.S. military personnel, the resulting crater and over 19 dead Americans are just symptoms on the surface.

The ultimate responsibility lies with U.S. foreign policy. In an era when the United States is supposed to be the defender and promoter of democracy in a changing world, our policy is dangerously unsound and undefined.

Amid the swirling barrage of news reports and commentary on the tragedy, one thing seems to come up again and again: Our presence is necessary to provide stability in the world.

A recent article in the Los Angeles Times paints a different picture. In Dhahran, Saudi Arabia, an American woman recalls being confronted about her short-sleeved shirt. "You should cover your arms!" he told me, "Does your husband know you are about like this?" I thought, "I'll never get used to this place," she said.

Such a difference in style of dress may not seem to be significant. But from the view of the average Saudi Arabian citizen, Americans are disturbing the basic tenets of their culture. The question of stability quickly becomes: Stability for whom? It seems that certain factions in

Middle Eastern culture believe our presence disrupts their way of life. And when they take action, instability seems to appear on both sides.

Attacks rightfully send the American public into an uproar. We cannot understand why anyone would be violently opposed to a U.S. presence. Yet these same Americans are filled with anger at Mexican immigrants entering our country, stealing our jobs and increasing the crime rate. Perhaps understanding the hatred at foreign presence isn't so far from us after all.

American influence goes beyond just military presence. The Russians, whom we were praising for their turn to democracy, may possibly elect a member of the Communist Party. Suddenly, Russia is about to become evil again. Why should the United States support or chastise a candidate elected fairly by people who have to live with the decision they make? Supporting Yeltsin does nothing but serve current U.S. interests. Is it not better to support the concept of a young democracy? We complain about our political system and campaigning, but when Yeltsin resorts to the same cheesy public relations stunts, it seems cute rather than something we should try to discourage. What's wrong with trying to correct their system where ours went wrong?

And what about South Africa? It seems the media have forgotten about them now that democracy is in place. An article from the New York Times reports that 60 to 80 people have died in violence relating to elections. A man who was trying to hang up campaign posters is in the hospital after receiving a severe beating. Is this the aftermath that U.S. support of democracy brings? In Israel, the recent election

of Benjamin Netanyahu came as a shock to U.S. policy, which supported Peres' election. Netanyahu has been labeled in the press a "hard-liner" in dealing with Arabic neighbors. Another flaw with U.S. policy is how to deal with the fact that the candidate we support won't win every time. Perception is reality, and our perception of Israel's problems looks far different if you are trying to live in the midst of it. Those people who have to live with the day-to-day threat of attack have much more of a right to choose their leader than any U.S. policy.

The United States should support democratic efforts around the world. The problem is that our current policy only meets it halfway. Placing troops on a permanent basis in a country where the majority of citizens see our presence as degrading to their lifestyle is not the way to promote stability. Promoting democracy and then not providing a guiding hand in correcting the flaws we have with our system is not the way to promote stability. Helping to create a democracy and then moving on, allowing violence to erupt, is not the way to promote stability.

The only way to actually spread working democracy in the world is to be active in the promotion, inception and continuous improvement of the ideology in any country. The current, convenient method of jumping from hot spot to hot spot isn't going to improve anything — even though it may be cheaper than being critically involved in the recreation of government. But which costs less?

The lives of the people in our armed forces are too precious to be wasted fulfilling policies that fail to finish what they start.

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