

# OPINION

MONDAY  
July 8, 1996

Page 5



## Day planners can't plan lifelong happiness

Reality doesn't bite, but if it did, I would be first in line for stitches.



JENNI HOWARD  
COLUMNIST

My latest experience with reality has come with the realization that my daily planner hasn't put me on my path to achievements and successes like its brochure said it would.

Rather, after over eight semesters of owning the little green thing, the only real accomplishments charted in it are my tendencies to be overambitious and to bite off more than I can chew.

Take, for example, this summer. According to my "things to do" list, by now I was supposed to have paid off half of my credit card debt, made a 4.0 in the first summer session and woken up at 6 a.m. to work out every morning before my 8 o'clock class.

But of course, it hasn't turned out that way. My alarm clock has only turned out to be a reminder that I have an amazing ability to tune out the buzzer until it's too late

to get to class. And that 4.0? Well, let's just say it will continue to be a dream of mine.

When I first bought the planner, the idea was that I would chart out goals in life, break them down into daily tasks (like the owner's manual instructed), and I would be on my merry little way to efficient living.

If my life followed the schedule in my planner, I would have become a very accomplished individual, most likely the youngest Nobel Prize winner ever.

However, I would have also missed out on all the late-night talks with friends, the phone calls home to Mom and Dad just to hear their voices and the enlightening conversations with strangers who happened to cross paths with me.

It's easy to get caught up in the time-management craze.

To see how important those organizers have become, find a friend who carries his planner with him all the time, and then hide it. What follows is an ugly scene — including possible twitches and nervous breakdowns — but it highlights the dependence we have on schedules and deadlines.

With all the time-management systems out there supposedly creating hours of free

time, you would think that people would be a little more relaxed by now. Instead, you find more articles on how to relax, make time for yourself and have it all, without making any sacrifices.

There's nothing wrong with a little discipline and goal-setting, but maybe we can find some space to put one more reminder on our "things to do" list: We're only human.

And as far as prioritizing goes, people should take a position of higher importance than a checklist. It's disturbing to come across articles in current magazines that give tips on how to eliminate those unanticipated interruptions in your life. Often, surprise visits or phone calls offer a new outlook on an experience.

It's the unplanned things in life that often teach us what we need to learn. Following a checklist may end up leaving us not with a reminder of things to do. Rather, it may remind us of opportunities we could have taken advantage of had we only been looking.

Jenni Howard is a Class of '96 economics and international studies major

## Court rulings don't justify death penalty



MARCUS GOODYEAR  
COLUMNIST

Last week, the Supreme Court raised the dead. Specifically, it resurrected the old debate on the death penalty with a new twist.

The court's ruling on the appeal of Georgia murderer Ellis Wayne Felker upheld key sections of the Anti-Terrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act of 1996. The act was recently passed by Congress and signed by President Clinton.

Felker claimed Congress had usurped the court's power by restricting a prisoner's ability to appeal. Felker's argument was rejected and Congress' tough-on-crime law was upheld. As a result, Texas, Pennsylvania and Virginia will execute a total of five convicted murderers within the next two weeks.

Sen. Orrin Hatch, a Utah Republican, explained the ruling as a stand against "incessant, frivolous appeals at the cost of taxpayers paying unnecessary dollars and the pain of victims and their families."

Hatch obviously believes two wrongs do make a right. We'll show those mean old nasty murderers what it feels like to die. That will make the families of victims feel better.

The senator does have a point about the money, though. The appeals of death row inmates are costing taxpayers money — but what a small price to pay for a person's life.

A murder is a horrible, disgusting crime, but it shouldn't be punished by denying the sanctity of life a second time.

Besides, the death penalty promotes a sadly idealistic view of the U.S. justice system. Not all convicted criminals are guilty.

The president of the National Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers, Robert Foglenest, points out, "As a result of this decision some innocent people are certain to be put to death."

The court's decision severely restricts a criminal from appealing for more than one writ of habeas corpus. Thus, some

cases may never have a second chance to reach justice.

But what are a few dead innocents when we can cut the \$4.6 billion Texas spent on its prison system in 1995? Fewer death row inmates means lower taxes. We could save thousands just by denying those excessive appeals and millions if we actually kill the prisoners before they run up a high price tag.

On June 28, the New Jersey Supreme Court made a shocking statement on the issue. The court actually denied the convicted murderer John M. Martini's request for execution in an attempt to protect the "reliability ... and integrity of death sentences in New Jersey."

Martini has been convicted of killing three men and is currently awaiting trial in Philadelphia on another murder charge. The court felt the prisoner's execution would have been based solely on his wish to die.

By foregoing the final level of his appeals, he was sentencing himself. No more juries, no more judges, just one man's passive acceptance. A closer look at Martini's competency reveals the logic of the court's decision. When asked why he had refused a final appeal, Martini said he wanted to die because prison food was bad, his cell was noisy and he didn't like the routine strip searches.

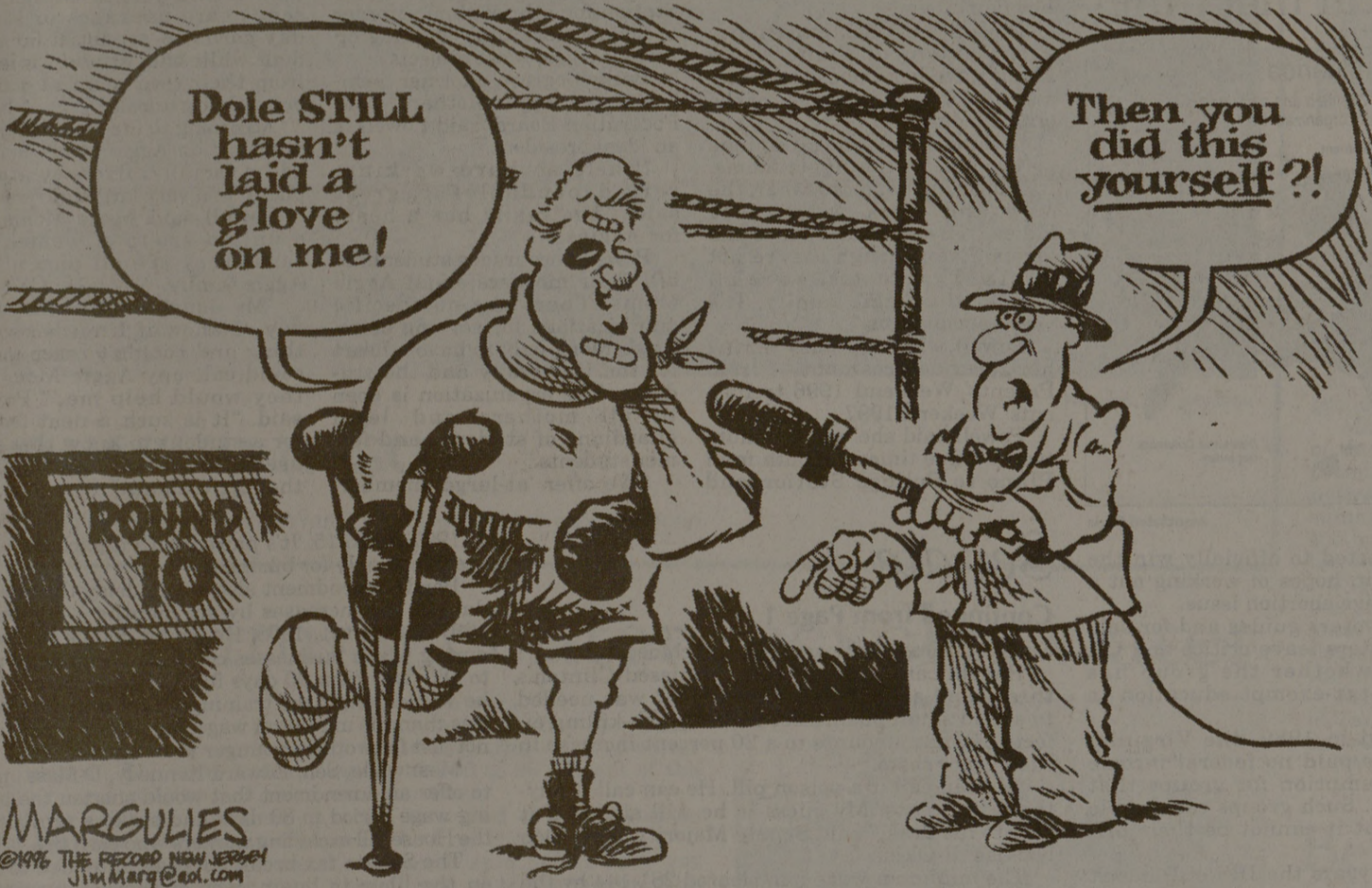
A man's execution shouldn't be based on such lunacy. State-funded suicide is not a demonstration of "reliability and integrity."

Martini has been convicted of murder. He is probably guilty. If he were released into the public, he might kill another person. But if Martini is executed, there is still a dead body to be accounted for, and this time no one will be put on trial for the murder.

Life is precious. When someone's life is taken by another person, it is murder — whether the murderer is holding a gun in a fit of passion or performing a lethal injection with the backing of a jury's sentence.

Our justice system thinks John M. Martini and Ellis Wayne Felker deserve to die. Let he who is without sin administer the first execution.

Marcus Goodyear is a Class of '97 English major



## Oberhelman

Continued from Page 1

While this department has been overly responsive to the needs of graduating seniors, the basic problem is the demand has far outstripped the supply. We are offering more seats in Spanish at the first-year level (101, 102, 140) than ever before, yet the demand is oppressive. The internationalization of academic curricula and cultural and environmental factors (e.g., NAFTA), have increased the demand for Spanish classes, even by students who have already fulfilled their core-curriculum language requirement. This is why the president of the University of Texas, Austin, infused hundreds of thousands of new dollars into his Spanish department just three years ago (the same year my budget was cut).

The department has acted proactively to lessen the demand for language classes. The department has instituted a policy re-

quiring any incoming freshman with prior knowledge of any foreign language — whether through academic work or by cultural experience — who wishes to pursue that language at Texas A&M to take a placement test. This will place him or her in the proper sequence of beginning and intermediate courses. Since 1993, the placement test has saved 3,134 seats for students — translating into a saving of \$313,400 for Texas A&M.

The department has taken other steps. It has established a new course, SPAN 140 ("Alternative Beginning Spanish"), for use in conjunction with the department's placement examination. The requirements for admission into Texas A&M have been changed, so that students must satisfy their core curriculum language requirement before they arrive. The language requirement for Liberal Arts B.A. majors has also been changed — from 14 credit hours (101-202) to six hours at the intermediate level (201-202). High-enrollment, video-based first-year Spanish course have been developed to serve non-

B.A. students. The department is in the process of re-evaluating the credit which Texas A&M University awards on the Advanced Placement Examination. Also, the department has volunteered to undergo a Continuous Improvement review of its delivery of first-year Spanish.

As should be obvious, this department has tried to fulfill its mission to the students. We have acted, given the monetary resources available, in the most responsible manner possible. The only remedy is an infusion of funds for teaching Spanish. The administration has helped whenever it could, but the simple fact is the state legislature must allocate additional funds for educational purposes (current funding is 42nd out of 50 states), and the students must realize their share of the costs of their education (currently, 20 percent) should be increased on the national level (25 percent).

Steve Oberhelman is the head of the Department of Modern and Classical Languages



## MAIL CALL

### Two sexes may learn by different methods

I found Jenni Howard and Jim Pawlikowski's July 1 discussion of the advantages and disadvantages of same-sex education interesting and would like to add some of my own ideas to what they had to say.

Proponents of same-sex education claim that hormonal changes in the adolescent body are a major contributor to the disparity between the performance of boys and girls in the sciences and in the arts. They can well demonstrate coeducation as a catalyst for disparity, but, even so, they fail to recognize the reasons why boys do better in the sciences (rather than the arts) and vice versa for girls.

Our media have popularized the theory that societal stereotypes are the sole cause of academic disparity between the genders — that, for instance, because girls have few role models in the sciences and engineering, they feel incompetent. I will certainly not eliminate this as a possible factor. I would like to point out, though, that boys have many more role models in the arts than girls do, yet still are outperformed by girls in that area. Clearly stereotypes are not the sole cause of the problem.

I believe that the gender disparity may be a result of differing learning methods generally employed by the two sexes. Ac-

cording to psychologists, there are basically two types of learners, global learners and procedural learners. Global learners, put simply, look for the big picture. Procedural learners are more interested in details. It just so happens that girls tend to be global learners, and boys tend to be procedural learners. This may explain why girls tend to display more aptitude in the arts, which is global in nature, and boys in science, which is more detailed.

Of course, if this is indeed the cause of the problem, it is easily rectifiable by adopting a dual instructional approach. It is important, however, to do this in a co-educational environment because not all girls are global and not all boys are procedural (I tend to be more of a global learner, myself). It is interesting to note, however, that the success of single-sex educational environments may be a result of instructors being forced to fit the subject material into a particular learning paradigm. If, however, instructors recognize there are two learning paradigms before they begin instructing students, and that they must conform to both for the entire class to be successful, they will likely be able to eliminate the discrepancy between the two genders' performance without resorting to gender separation.

Michael Nichols  
Class of '97