

# OPINION

THURSDAY  
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THE BATTALION  
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## EDITORIAL

### TED HOPGOOD

The newly appointed commandant should do well in his new role.

Since the resignation of former Corps Commandant Maj. Gen. Thomas G. Darling on June 1, Texas A&M administrators have been searching for a suitable replacement for him. After an exhaustive selection process carried out by the Search Advisory Committee, Maj. Gen. M.T. "Ted" Hopgood has now been chosen for the position. And judging by others' comments about him, the panel has chosen well.

Darling, who announced his resignation last spring, has worked closely with the University to select a successor. He recommended that the committee look for someone with leadership skills, strong ethics and team commitment. He also said he hoped the new commandant would possess a "genuine ... love for Texas A&M and the Corps of Cadets."

Considering Hopgood's record, there is nothing to suggest that Darling — or anyone else — will be disappointed in the new commandant.

The selection process was rigorous, involving interviews with the committee, an open forum and final approval by Vice President for Student Affairs J. Malon Southerland, but Hopgood stood out from the begin-

ning. His enthusiasm and qualifications impressed those involved in the process.

The new commandant comes from a distinguished position as president of the Marine Corps University in Virginia. His job combined a top military position with an involvement in higher education — an appropriate combination for a Corps commandant.

Hopgood has stated his intent to keep open communication between himself and the cadets, which is always an important goal for people in high-ranking positions.

Finally, his status as an Aggie shouldn't be overlooked. Applicants don't have to be Aggies to be considered for the position of commandant, but Hopgood — who graduated from A&M in 1965 — knows from experience what it's like to be in the Corps. Being a part of A&M and its traditions for over 30 years should contribute to his performance and make him even more respected among cadets.

Though the outstanding performance of Darling will be a hard act to follow, Hopgood could become one of A&M's best and most-appreciated commandants.

## Incivility marks American politics



JEREMY VALDEZ  
COLUMNIST

American politics has never been a bed of roses. Some early presidential candidates even had to endure jabs about their mothers.

But today's political landscape is a particularly nasty place where my mother fears to tread. With an increase in negative advertising and growing extremism in political commentary, many Americans are wondering why nobody engages in civil public discourse anymore.

Ironically, the technological advances that have enabled the global village to communicate freely may have hastened our country's descent into verbal violence.

Before the explosion of broadcast media, there was no point in a politician or commentator being vicious towards an opponent, because relatively few voters would hear the message in a timely manner.

Now, however, there is a skyful of broadcast outlets that can publish news (or personal attacks) instantly and in shallow, less-than-a-minute sound bites. The way the news is reported invites scathing diatribes that evoke emotions rather than thoughts.

How would Rush Limbaugh survive without omnipresent microphones, cameras and politically motivated news editors? Limbaugh makes a multimillion-dollar living taking the worst 30 seconds of a Democratic press conference and playing that clip over and over for 15 minutes as he ridicules the speaker.

The audience is not the least bit concerned whether the quote was taken out of context, and Rush wouldn't dare give them more than 30 seconds of the clip to determine the context.

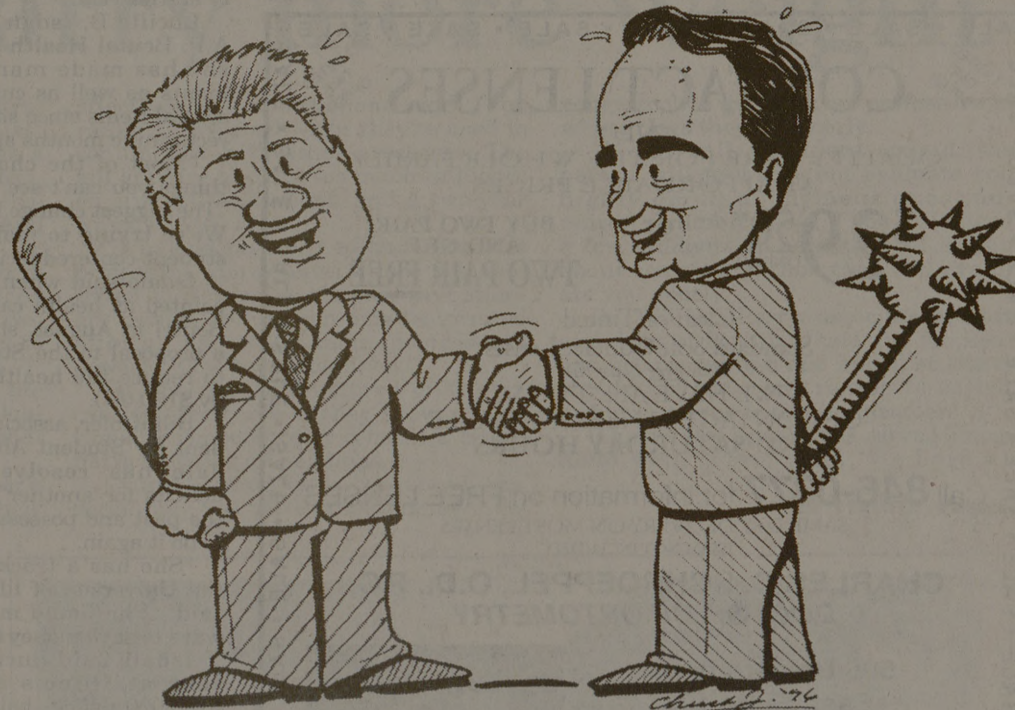
How can Rush claim a moral high ground when he has captioned a picture of Chelsea Clinton with the label "White House Dog"?

The modern hit-and-run style of news broadcasting is what enabled Capitol Hill Democrats to sabotage the appointment of Robert Bork to the U.S. Supreme Court.

With a constant barrage of sound bites, Bork was demonized as a right-wing extremist who would single-handedly demolish abortion rights and protections against unreasonable searches and seizures.

The current spirit of maliciousness in politics may have helped us cultivate our cynicism toward government officials.

A recent ABC News poll found that more than 60 percent of Americans believe Presi-



dent Clinton is evasive and dishonest about his Whitewater investments and the misappropriated FBI files.

However when the same poll asked, "Are you satisfied with Bill Clinton's performance as president?" more than 60 percent of the respondents indicated that they approve of the chief executive.

There's the rub. Whether or not Clinton is guilty as charged, there are a significant number of Americans who believe that a dishonest president can do a good job. Some of us no longer demand truthfulness from the president.

And why should we? The president lives in a Washington populated by legislative Tiki gods who speak loudly and throw small sticks at every opportunity. When the verbal brawls of congressmen spill out of chamber doors and onto the television sets of Americans, the voters slowly conclude that government officials lack a sense of common decency.

Americans who can't expect decency won't raise their hopes for honesty. This general disdain for government officials extends down to the lowest levels of government.

Even forestry agents and meat inspectors report increased threats of violence directed towards them.

The lack of respect for politicians and the offices they occupy is significant precisely because we are a nation where government rules by consent of the people. Unless the government can recover some semblance of public regard, the notion of popular consent is jeopardized.

The lack of civility in political discussion will not be easy to remedy. It isn't a problem that can be solved with yet another piece of legislation. The solution requires that individual government officials exercise new reserve in their actions and speeches.

Additionally, the people who report on and make fun of Washington will have to reconsider their professional ethics and work to ensure that their coverage is fair and issue-based.

There is a legitimate need for robust debate. And if laughter can be used as a defense mechanism, then certainly political satire can be used as a weapon against tyranny. But if our elected debaters and our lauded reporters and satirists don't learn to settle down and behave, we'll have a Washington that needs not just a proper candidate, but a mother.

Jeremy Valdez is a Class of '96 chemical engineering major

## Clinton spreads amnesia across U.S.

I'm Ol' Army. No ... I mean Oooooo! Army — class of '95 and still going strong on that undergraduate degree.

Recently, though, my extreme age has filled me with nostalgia ... courtesy of President Clinton. Yep, our illustrious first champion of the proletariat is spending all his time reminding Americans how awful things were before he took over.

I long for the day when anyone could go to McUzi's and order those super extra value meals to go. Ah yes, I remember well ordering a Coke, fries and an AK-47 with armor-piercing bullets — which I would get for the extra Monopoly game pieces.

After dinner, we would go next door to shoot at old people and children just for kicks. As Republicans, we hated old people and wanted to starve children, so this was perfectly normal in those days.

Being Republican had some other bonuses in the good days under Reagan. Since, as Republicans, our parents were

all unbelievably wealthy and never paid a dime in taxes, we never had to work.

Sometimes, though, we would go to see how the oppressed working-class families lived on the other side of our completely white town.

I remember Fred at the 7-11 on the corner.

Poor Fred worked 400,000 hours every week, but, because the minimum wage was so low, could only afford to buy one loaf of off-brand white bread ... without jelly.

Women knew their places back then. They veiled their faces in public, but usually didn't go out because they were too busy cooking and having illegal abortions.

All the kids ran wild and took funky pills until Clinton was elected — but we never swallowed them.

Come to think of it, all those pills might be affecting my memory about the whole Republican experience.

Back in our brave new Democratic world, yesterday, the president firmly promised to veto any bill the Congress sends him which repeals the assault weapons ban. Now it might be that automatic assault weapons have been basically illegal to manufacture for public purchase for almost as long as Bill Clinton

has been alive, but my memory fades ...

As for Fred, well he didn't really earn minimum wage, but that doesn't matter. The Congress is in the process of sacrificing common sense on the altar of demagoguery — that means "cool sounding words meant to make people who disagree look like jerks."

Of course, the majority of minimum-wage earners are under 21 (Oh, did they leave that little fact out of the TV report?). Congress must be paying heed to the old slogan, "Teenagers of the World, Unite!"

Lots of votes in that "I love Joey Lawrence" crowd.

The more I think about it, I don't quite remember things the way the president would like me to. Maybe I should check my journal to see what really happened — oops, almost forgot: We were all illiterate before the Arkansas crowd took over.

Some good things may have come from Bill's foray into revisionism: No one has worn parachute pants since Clinton has been in office.

But if he can prove he deserves credit for that one, I might just vote for him in November.

David Taylor is a Class of '95 management major



DAVID TAYLOR  
CITY EDITOR



## MAIL CALL

### KISS is so normal, even Garth Brooks likes them

I am writing this letter in response to Amy Uptmor's column concerning the band KISS. Who is she kidding? Has she never been to a rock concert before? KISS fans are no more crazy than any other fans, and not all of us are "old men in tights and makeup." Most of us are simply ordinary people, and apparently she isn't a country music fan either, because she would know that Garth Brooks' biggest influence was KISS. Last time I checked, Garth Brooks didn't wear tights — although his Wranglers may be tight enough for a close second.

I am sorry Uptmor doesn't like KISS. I guess my advice for her would be to turn off the radio the next time one of their songs comes on and let the rest of us enjoy it.

Yvette L. Segura  
Class of '97

### Many Aggies know that dancing is a sport

This letter is in response to Kristina Buffin's "dancing is not a sport" comment in her column on Wednesday. This comment could only come from one of two kinds of people: someone is ignorant or someone who is not a dancer. Giving Buffin the benefit of the doubt, I will assume the latter.

She says, "Dancing does not involve serious training." Oh really? Why don't you tell that to the Texas Aggie Dance Team, which trains and practices hours-on-end every day of the week, or perhaps to the Aggie Wranglers, whose newest members train in nine-hour summer workshops and have numerous practices during the school year. Or maybe she could tell that to the Fade to Black dance organization, the Silver Spurs of Aggie-land, the Dance Arts Society or a ballerina who trains for most of her life. I'm sure they would all agree that dancing does not require serious training. A sport involves "physical exercise and having a set form and body of rules." After telling these groups that dancing does not require serious training, try telling them after a performance or competition that

dancing does not require physical exercise ... that is, if you can get an answer between them gasping for air and gulping water.

As for the set form and body of rules, let me refer her to the United Country Western Dance Council rules. These consist of more than 70 pages and 74 sections regulating everything from how high the heels on your boots are to penalties for losing your hat.

And as for dancing not being a game, Webster's Dictionary defines a game as "a contact governed by specific rules." So, how is basketball, baseball, track — whatever — any more of a game than competitive dancing? According to Buffin's and the American Heritage Dictionary's definition of a sport, dancing meets all the criteria.

So, while I'm not saying ballroom dancing, or any kind of dancing, should be in the Olympics, I do believe she is mistaken in saying dancing is not a sport.

Michelle Metcalf  
Class of '98

### Columnist presents mainstream values

Kudos to David Boldt. His refreshingly simplistic and ordinary observations make for an enjoyable read. It's great to see someone highlighting middle-class, drug-free, non-gang member, white-boy values in The Battalion.

Stephen C. Stout  
Class of '97

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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