

# OPINION

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## PTTS racks up confiscated bikes

**N**ow forming at the north end of the Koldus Building, the nationally famous fightin' Texas Aggie Parking Service Officers — those men and women in blue, armed with yellow envelopes and a computer, who always manage to screw that good day you were trying to have.



DAVID BOLDT  
COLUMNIST

It's no secret PTTS is not the most adored organization on campus. It's no secret that what parking service officers do causes a great deal of frustration and anger on the part of A&M students. But the latest stench is coming from flatbed trailers driving around campus when no one's here.

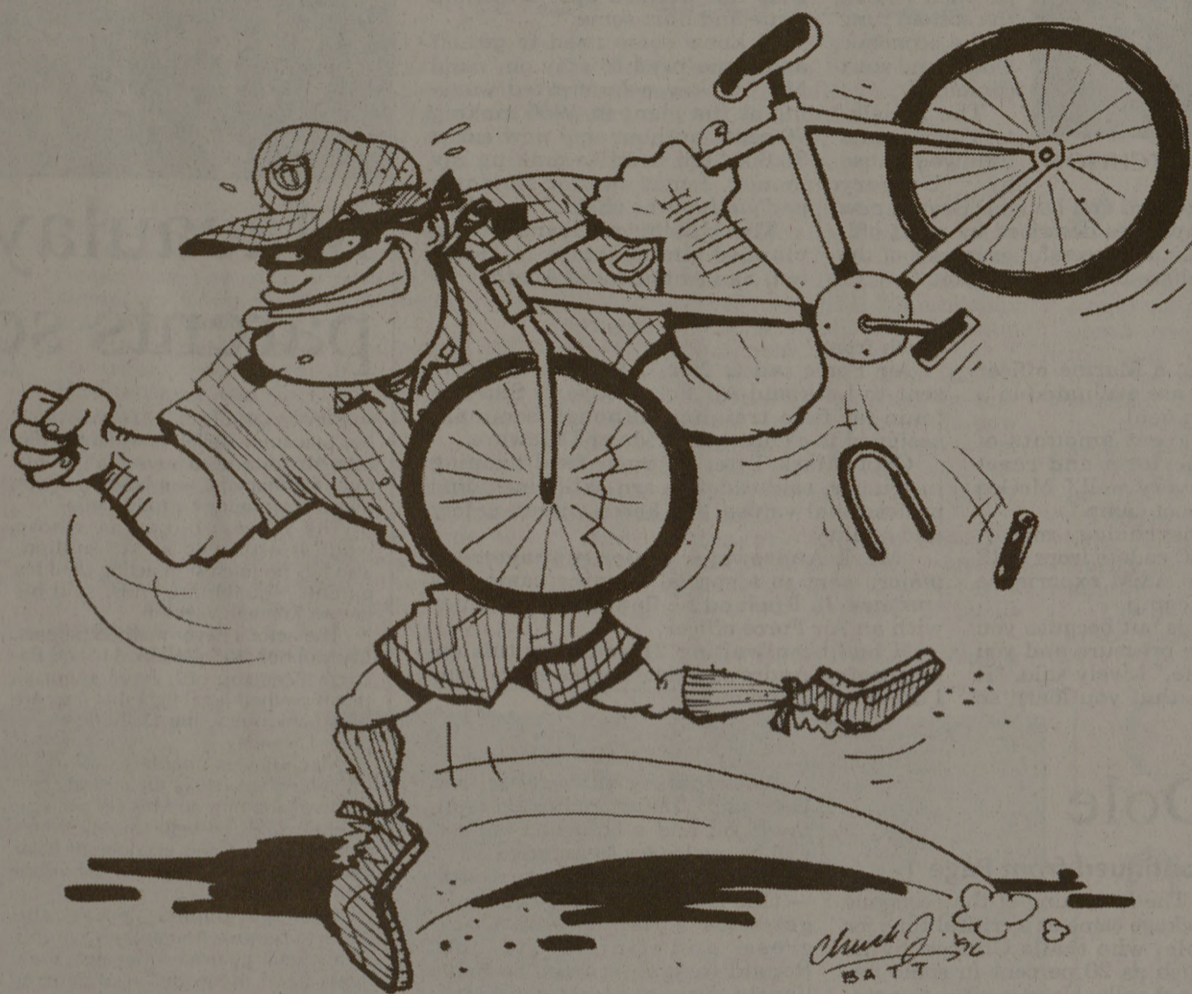
Lately, between semesters, PTTS officers have been driving around the grounds of this fine institution and taking bikes off the racks.

When I first heard of this, I assumed they just take the ones that are really old, have been there a long time, and are unwanted by the owners. I thought, surely the bikes are tagged in an attempt to notify the owners or to find out how long they've been there.

No; in fact, PTTS Director Tom Williams said, "It doesn't matter, if (the bikes) are in the bike racks, they will be removed." However, he also said, "We normally don't remove one if it looks fairly new."

Wow, I was worried there for a minute. Maybe my bike is safe after all, since it isn't that old. I guess it's only the people with older bikes who have their property taken at the hands of a PTTS officer. I guess the UPD should just impound all the cars — the older ones only, of course — that are left on campus between semesters.

Autumn Leverage, a Class of '98 bioengineering major, summed it up well. She said, "Seeing as how the bike racks are public property, PTTS has no right to take anyone's bike, no matter how long they leave it. They pay their fees like everyone



else. It's theft — straight up." So what do you think happens to all these confiscated bikes? You think the owners can pick them up when they return to school? Sure they can — at the auction for the highest bid. But the money goes to charity, right?

Nope; Williams said, "They (revenues) currently go back into the parking stream." It's amazing what an organization can get away with when it's backed by a major university.

There has to be a better solution. PTTS should at least mark the bikes while school is still in session so the owners can have some warning. Many students who have bikes don't have a car. And many students who do have cars don't need their bikes at their parents' houses, so why should they take them home? Are the bikes bothering

anyone while chained to a bike rack for two weeks?

There are obviously some abandoned bikes which are not in working order and need to be removed. In some cities around the country, service organizations have gone around and taken bikes that are run-down and abandoned, fixed them up, painted them completely yellow (tires and all), and hung permanent signs denoting them as public-use bikes.

It has been pretty successful. People simply use the bikes and leave them in the open for the next person when they're done. Not too many bike thieves want to steal a bike completely covered in yellow spray paint.

PTTS does have a paint shop it could use to recycle the bikes for public use. But of course, if someone has an accident, someone is

liable. "If it is a University thing," Williams said, "then whoever does it (fix up and paint the bikes) is going to get sued. If it is a student organization, it's a different issue, a different type of coverage." This would be a great opportunity for some service organization to tackle, any student organization for that matter.

There's no doubt that PTTS pisses a lot of people off in its effort to enforce parking matters, but the latest attempt to wring the students for more money is completely ludicrous. Williams said, "University regulations require us to do this." But that doesn't justify stealing people's bikes and selling them to the highest bidder.

David Boldt is a Class of '97 marketing and management major

## Higher priorities justify AIDS cuts

**F**or many, it's time to get the red ribbons out again. This year, the national Centers for Disease Control (CDC) is receiving \$5 million less earmarked for AIDS prevention from the federal government than it received last year. This undoubtedly will incense quite a few people, especially those directly affected by the virus.



DAVID RECHT  
COLUMNIST

However, before condemning the loss of funding, one needs to take into account where the money will be channeled.

The CDC has a lot on its mind these days. New cases of tuberculosis are spreading rapidly through many large metropolitan areas such as New York and Houston. Strains of bacteria are showing resistance to antibiotics. Concern in Europe over contaminated beef has led Americans to consider the safety of its food sources. Finally, Alzheimer's disease, the cruellest disease of all, ravages older Americans. One estimate says 50 percent of the U.S. population over 80 suffers from this disease.

How do people contract the virus that causes AIDS? In order to acquire HIV, one must be exposed in one of three ways: sexual contact, a needle or a blood transfusion. Because of recent intensive screening of the nationwide blood bank, the chance of becoming infected through a transfusion is minimal.

This leads to an important conclusion: The vast majority of new AIDS cases are related to voluntary individual behavior. Reckless drug use and sexual behavior — both controllable — are the culprits. Sexually speaking, homo-

sexual cases of HIV greatly outnumber heterosexual cases of HIV. Many use this as a reason to condemn homosexuality. However, this is narrow-minded and unfair to the gay community. Promiscuity, not homosexuality, should be condemned.

It makes absolutely no difference if one is gay or straight. In order to prevent the spread of AIDS, attitudes toward sexual activity need modification, regardless of sexual orientation. The proper way to attack the virus is to have only a monogamous sexual relationship with someone who has tested negative for HIV. The American taxpayer needs no money back from the government to behave responsibly.

The theme of responsibility also applies to the acquisition of AIDS through needles. No matter what someone is injecting into his or her body, a new needle should be used each time an injection is made. Again, one comes across a common theme: individual precaution, and no amount of research money can combat the disease like it.

Thus, those who choose to act responsibly can live a life free of concern for contracting HIV. Further mastery of blood screening will render new infections as 100 percent attributable to one's behavior.

Why, then, should the CDC devote such a disproportionate amount of money to AIDS research while innocent victims are suffering of tuberculosis, Alzheimer's, Parkinson's and others? Every dollar counts in the research industry, and over the past 15 years, HIV has strangled money from other causes. The \$5 million the CDC is not spending on AIDS prevention is no cause for alarm. The money ultimately will be directed to worthy research.

David Recht is a Class of '97 civil engineering major

## Without the media, we'd have to think for ourselves

It's great to be a part of the media.

Not only are we responsible for all the news that you read, see or hear, we've recently decided we deserve more recognition than we get. After all, we've gone to a lot of trouble to make sure you stay abreast of everything that happens all the time. In fact, I think people need to recognize the media for all we do. We save people a lot of time by sorting out issues for them.



STEPHEN LLANO  
COLUMNIST

Take that TWA plane crash/bombing/missile attack. When it happened, we launched hundreds of helicopters to videotape the flaming wreckage. Since we couldn't videotape the actual explosion, we figured that was close enough. And when Gov. Pataki, Sen. D'Amato and Mayor Giuliani began to cite exactly what caused the crash, we were right there recording every word they said. Since they're elected officials, they know exactly what's going on. Forget talking to an actual crash-site investigator. Our ratings would go down if we talked to someone who looks unappealing.

And when they figure out whether it was a missile or a bomb, don't worry, we'll be ready. If it's a bomb, we know exactly where to find that videotaped file footage showing scores of Muslims praying. Everyone knows that if you wear a turban and live in the Middle East, you're probably a terrorist, or at least want to be one. Everyone knows it couldn't possibly be a random malicious act.

As for the Olympic pipe bombing, we did a great service for the FBI. At first, we fell into the trap of thinking that Richard Jewell — since he was a security guard — was helping move people away from the fatal explosive. But when the FBI questioned him, we knew better. Obviously, when the FBI questions you, you're going to be charged, so we decided to go ahead and plaster his face on the front page of every major newspaper.

Along with the story about how he's the leading suspect (even though he hasn't been charged or arrested), we

can run a story about the failure of the American system to provide adequate security measures (never mind the fact that the bomb squads and security in Atlanta were trained to deal with professional terrorist devices, not pipe bombs any high school chemistry student can make). I sure hope they take advantage of our assistance in convicting this guy.

If it wasn't him, I'm sure we could whip up something about the misguided hooligans that represent our country's future. Just show some footage of 13-year-olds wearing flannel. Obviously they're up to no good. Of course, it's not their fault. All we have left to do is find a band with questionable lyrics in their songs, and we've found their influence.

Even when there's no tragedy, we're still at work. If I worked for NBC, I could make any offhand remark about those silly foreign countries that didn't win any Olympic medals. After all, they have such a strange way of life that makes no sense. Imagine, some countries pay people to play ping pong. How silly.

Oh, and I wouldn't forget to praise the true heroes of the Olympics, the Dream Team. Doesn't it make your heart break to think about all they have sacrificed just to be in Atlanta? I can hear Bob Costas and my other comrades-in-arms sniffing just thinking about that medal ceremony.

As for our elected officials, the most important things a candidate does are in his or her private life. Unless they pass a stunning new policy that benefits everyone every single day, we forget about it. After all, it's not news unless it happened today. Sometimes that's not good enough, and we have to predict what's going to happen tomorrow.

If they'd just let us do all the decision-making, this country would run a whole lot smoother. It's not like we overgeneralize or anything. The masses have to be informed, and we're responsible. If only everyone realized how ignorant they are compared to the media.

But, alas, this isn't a perfect world, and I have a lot of media things to do. I'm still trying to link Richard Jewell to the TWA explosion.

Stephen Llano is a Class of '97 history major



## MAIL CALL

### Lollapalooza column perpetuates stereotypes

I have felt the need to argue about several different articles over the years, but this one just did it for me. I am referring to April Towery's column about Lollapalooza, or Metallica rather, in the July 29 Battalion. It is so opinionated and holds very few facts. I understand the childish anger people feel about the general change in the style of Lollapalooza, but hey, if that is what it takes

to keep it alive, so be it. Just because the bands have changed, what does the audience have to "own at least four black Iron Maiden T-Shirts" have to do with anything? I guess I was not aware that Iron Maiden was there this year. I must have missed them while I was off buying drugs.

And now, about Metallica. It is ridiculous to base the success of an album on how many people in College Station buy it. If Metallica is struggling so much, why has Load been in the top ten selling charts for the entire

seven weeks it has been out, and more recently in the top five? Maybe these statistics should be observed before assuming no one even listens to them anymore. Metallica has had six major albums out over the past 15 years, all of which have been very successful. Towery probably hadn't even heard of Metallica before the Black album in 1991. If she had followed Metallica from their "garage days" and on through Kill 'Em All all the way to Load, then I might say she knew enough about Metallica to say James Hetfield "has lost his touch."

Until then maybe she should just stick to talking about Rancid and Sponge, if they are even worth the effort. I would have paid 50 bucks to go to Lollapalooza if Metallica and Soundgarden were the only bands there.

Jennifer Ford  
Class of '98