

# Generation Gap Social security breeds greed

Columnist



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Renamed today, Social Security would most likely be called "social insecurity," as it occupies an increasing portion of the national budget, and it will be our generation who will bear the costs.

According to research done by economist Eli Ginzberg, 50 workers paid taxes to support each beneficiary of Social Security in 1945, but three workers provided for each beneficiary in 1980, and by the year 2035, this number is expected to decrease to two workers per beneficiary. This means that each worker will be shouldering more of the burden to provide for each recipient. It is frustrating to hear our national leaders talk about how they would like to balance the budget, yet do nothing to curb the growing portion of the national expenditures that Social Security occupies. Lawmakers in Washington, D.C. are more than aware of the crisis awaiting us. According to the Sept. 16 issue of Newsweek, after co-chairing the bipartisan entitlements commission, Sen. John Kerry, found that America will not be able to even the "crudest, bare-bones government" in the near future unless Social Security and Medicare are brought under control. And the result of the committee's report? The committee will try to form another bipartisan committee to look at the issue sometime next year. On the surface, the Senate's procrastination in addressing the Social Security crisis may seem to stem from a conflict of partisan interests. However, at the root of the issue lies not a partisan conflict, but a conflict in generations. More importantly, there is a misunderstanding in each generation's attitude toward the welfare of the other. Each age group has equally important concerns. The younger generations are concerned about what will be left of the taxes they pay today. The older generations are concerned about what has happened to the taxes they paid yesterday.

Unfortunately, it is only the older generations that have sufficiently voiced their worries. Because it will be we who pay the taxes and receive much less in return, our generation should be just as vocal in expressing our concern for Social Security. The potential backlash of the elderly community against Social Security reform causes a politician's knees to shake a little. In a country where our representatives are elected by the people, taking a stand on potentially divisive issues, such as Social Security, spells out reelection woes for those who have devoted their careers to politics. But the younger generations of Americans should be just as adamant in pressuring their representatives to address the dilemma of Social Security now and not when it is politically more convenient. In their quest for a financially secure future, however, young Americans should keep in mind what the elderly have contributed to this country in the past. No, they may not be around when Social Security is no longer functional. But they aren't dead yet, and many have spent their lives paying a tax in which they were promised a benefits program in return. This issue is too critical to our nation's livelihood to put off for a future generation to deal with. Rather than a bipartisan group, a bigenerational group composed of citizens representing all viewpoints should be formed. If young Americans, while voicing their concern, showed Congress there could be a middle ground, perhaps it would be more eager to address the Social Security crisis. It may be difficult to get past the question of "What's in it for me?" but it is necessary if we hope to curb the growth and complexity of Social Security before it becomes truly uncontrollable.

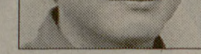
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# Just add spice to Perot's run

Despite their similar names, family values and TV's family hour have nothing in common. Maybe it's time presidential candidate Ross Perot tried to capitalize on it.



Shannon Halbrook  
Junior English major

Daniel Becker, a Republican running for a Georgia seat in the U.S. House of Representatives, made a commercial of which he was pretty proud — a graphic depiction of an aborted fetus — and sent it to a local TV station. The station chose to bury the ad in the late evening. But Becker didn't want his message to be lost on the vote-rich elementary school market that has to go to bed at 8:30p.m., so he took his case to a federal appeals court.

The court ruled in Becker's favor, striking down a previous FCC ruling that allowed stations to determine for themselves when to air political campaign commercials. The ruling reiterated the law that broadcast media stations are required to allow candidates for office "reasonable access" to radio and TV time, no matter how offensive their commercials are. Well, good for Becker. Now he can show as many fetuses — or any other offensive things — as he wants to show on TV. But presidential candidate Ross Perot can take advantage of this ruling better than anyone. He has said repeatedly that his campaign battles will be waged over the airwaves. He's aired five half-hour infomercials this year — he even announced his running mate on one. "This whole campaign ... is

Now wait a DAGBURN. FLEABITTEN, GIANT SUCKING SOUND MINUTE...



being run differently from other candidates," the lucky VP choice, Pat Choate, has said. "Although many people make fun of these infomercials, Ross Perot can explain an issue so people can understand it." Ah yes, his colorful graphs, charts and bumpkinisms make Perot a lot of fun. But, to actually hear his message, people have to watch him.

According to Nielsen numbers, Perot's first infomercial in 1992 captured the attention of 11.2 million households and came in 32nd among 90 programs. But this year, his first infomercial hit rock-bottom when it aired Sept. 1. It tied for 104th among 107 programs and was watched by fewer than 2 million households. Obviously, Perot needs to jazz up his message. And, thanks to Daniel Becker and this appeals court ruling, he can do it offensively. On Saturday night around 10:30, most Americans were either out getting plastered or in the dining room playing Deluxe Scrabble with their families. But Perot was emoting his heart out in a taped

infomercial entitled "Made in the USA ... Again." It was neither the most exciting of infomercials nor the best of time slots. Some parts of the infomercial were almost as offensive as an aborted fetus. An African-American fellow named Dick Toliver drew a pretty sick comparison between Ross Perot and Martin Luther King Jr. The trouble is Perot has no opinion on abortion or any other topic that doesn't have to do with NAFTA, GATT, international trade or graphic patriotism. It's hard to think of controversial visuals except charts with offensive colors. Perhaps Perot could show a blue-shirted, yellow-hard-hatted worker being bloodily and nastily crushed by a big piece of cardboard shaped like Mexico. At least people would watch. There's something vaguely Monty Python-esque about the image. Perot may still be in the race, but only nominally. To advance his campaign, he has to take his love for seeing himself on TV and combine it with a little offensive flair. Anything else fails to reflect the spirit of American politics.



## MAIL CALL

### S provides many benefits to users

Regarding Heather Pace's Sept. 10 column.

When I read Pace's article about CIS I was concerned with the Help Desk workers. I do agree that VM is not very easy to use. I personally think CIS should get rid of it. But what concerns me is that if she is using so much trouble with it, doesn't she switch to a different system to use e-mail? A&M has three other systems that are much better to use, and I am sure the Help Desk would be kind enough to help switch her e-mail. What annoyed me was her comment that CIS employees have no clue. With the amount of systems CIS has to offer, it is possible for every Help Desk worker to know everything. It would be nice to have all the answers right away, but unfortunately it might take a walk across campus or an extra phone call to the information you want.

Eric Nelsen  
Class of '98

### Halbrook uses faulty reasoning

Regarding Shannon Halbrook's 10 column.

Some response is required because of the many false statements contained in Halbrook's column. Halbrook complains that "the College Republicans is a bit too aggressive with those damn fliers." As advisor to the College Republicans, I urged the CRs to cease the number of fliers rather than to engage in whining the Battalion about a problem that has become epidemic. As soon as we put up any fliers, real extremists who do not believe in free speech destroy, take and remove our fliers. We distribute fewer fliers if people stop removing them. Halbrook speaks of "our racially

would buy a Texas A&M shirt. Those who are a cut above the rest are the ones smart enough to realize they do not need a hypocritical organization to be successful in life and have great friends.

Matthew K. Zeve  
Class of '99

### Minor errs with parking solutions

Regarding David Minor's Sept. 13 column.

I just thought that someone should let Minor know that we have a walkway for students to cross between East and West Campus when a train is passing through. Oops, I forgot, that involves a little extra walking so why don't we just increase the local taxes to pay for a costly relocation of the railroad tracks? Also, carpooling is a great idea; however, implementing a carpool parking lot would require having manned booths at all entrances to ensure that carpools are being used. We have all seen the long lines for pay parking around the campus, this proposal would just add to that particular problem. Not to mention that carpooling for college students is a difficult task unless one student doesn't mind waiting a couple of hours for his or her carpool buddy to get out of class. Don't get me wrong — David Minor had some excellent ideas (i.e. abolishing the on-campus driving), but sometimes we need to think about all of the factors involved.

Justin Trice  
Graduate Student

### Greek life provides little for members

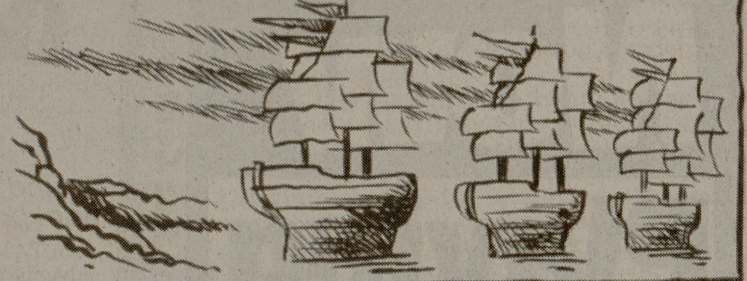
Regarding Sean McAlister's Sept. 12 column.

I think McAlister should have thought again before he wrote his column about fraternities. He stated fraternities were formed to "focus primarily on scholarship, athletics, and brotherhood." Obviously, times change because I have friends in fraternities and all they mention is the parties, not philanthropy or pledgeship. I guess since I do not plan to join a fraternity, I am not "a cut above the rest," as McAlister states. Being in a club does not make one person better than another. The truth of the matter is that fraternities tend to separate themselves from non-Greeks. With such elitist attitudes, how can they expect to be looked at positively at A&M? I have one question for McAlister: If fraternities are so great, why does he need to write a recruiting speech in The Battalion? If I wanted to pay money to wear letters on my chest, I

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## GREAT MOMENTS in DISCOVERY:

### Columbus visits America



Man lands on the moon

### G.O.P. courts black voters



## Editorial Roundup

(AP)—A sampling of editorial opinion from Texas newspapers:

San Antonio Express-News on state ethics policy:

Gov. George W. Bush's move to restrict lobbying activities of former employees puts him in a class by himself. He is the first Texas governor to do so. That shouldn't be lost on state legislators. Bush last week announced he will limit the lobbying activities of staff members who leave his administration. The tough new policy also prohibits senior staff members from working in the governor's office if their spouses are registered lobbyists. The governor joins a handful of state officials who also seem to understand that the perception of influence-peddling is unacceptable. House Speaker Pete Laney and Lt. Gov. Bob Bullock have similar policies in place. Surely other legislators can see the need to follow Bush's lead. They now are free to work as lobbyists as soon as they leave office. As such, the perception lingers that former lawmakers would enjoy greater access to the Statehouse. Does anyone really believe they don't? The public, meanwhile, is left to wonder if the lobbyists will cross the line between a perceived conflict of interest and a real one. The Legislature in 1991 passed

an ethics law barring former members of state boards and commissions and former high-level state agency employees from representing clients before their former boards or agencies during the first two years after leaving their state jobs. A glaring omission leaves lawmakers untouched. That should be remedied.

Amarillo Globe-News on White House ethics:

Why should Americans be surprised any more when they read about scandals surrounding key players in the Clinton administration or in the president's re-election campaign? Richard Morris, the married architect of the president's "family values" message, has quit amid allegations that he conducted a year-long affair with a Washington, D.C., hooker. Susan McDougal, convicted in the complicated Whitewater land deal involving President and Mrs. Clinton, now has been cited for contempt for refusing to tell a grand jury whether the president lied under oath during the Little Rock, Ark., trial. She plans to go to jail. The late Commerce Secretary Ron Brown was under investigation at the time of his death about his dealings with Vietnamese businessmen and whether they,

too, violated federal ethics laws. Housing Secretary Henry Cisneros, once a rising political star in Texas, admitted to making payments to a former mistress. And we've had congressional investigations into matters relating to the White House travel office and the egregious mishandling of FBI files by White House personnel. Yet polls continue to show that character doesn't seem to matter in this election. In the eyes of millions of Americans, the economy concerns them most. Granted, the economy is doing well. But no president should embrace all the credit during good times, or accept all the blame during the bad times. Meanwhile, the character issue continues to burble along virtually unnoticed. Well, we should notice it. We should be concerned — if not surprised — by the seemingly ever-growing list of ethical questions that continue to dog this White House. This, remember, is an administration that promised us the cleanest ethical standard any of us ever has seen. Does the White House deserve the burning scrutiny it so far seems to be evading? Yes. The president himself invited it by making a vow he's been unable to keep.