

Privacy put  
at peril by  
genetics

Move over, Psychic Friends. A new technique of reading the future may be coming your way in the form of genetic testing. What may be coming along with it, however, is a legal right for others to know your future as well as to judge you based on it.

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Currently, there is no estab- led legal protection against hns having access to an indi- dual's genetic information.

Columnist



Jenni Howard  
Senior economics  
and international  
studies major

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with the current research on genetically-based behavioral traits. If a link were found, stereotypes could be placed on individuals before they even developed the trait.

Certain tests can be performed on humans to determine whether or not they carry genes for some diseases, and these tests could be helpful in the future for preventing disease. But for now, they only provide a sense of reluctant anticipation for what could lie ahead, and possible discrimination if others find out.

Consider the case of a pregnant woman in California who has given two options from her health Maintenance Organization (HMO) after discovering her child would have cystic fibrosis: get an abortion, or have the child and forget any medical coverage for its care.

The woman ended up having the child, and the HMO backed down after threats of a lawsuit. Unfortunately, the occurrence insurance companies reject clients based on what they would genetically be at risk for may become more common.

It would only be natural to expect health insurance organizations to want to know how insurable their clients are, especially with the rising cost of health care. But the result would deny coverage to those who need it the most. What is more disturbing is how easy it would be to access genetic information about people without them ever knowing it.

In the Jan. 17, 1994, issue of Time magazine, George Annas, professor of health law at Boston University, said it would be completely legal to use the clippings of Bill Clinton's hair from a barbershop, have them analyzed, and publish a list of diseases he'd be at risk for based on his genetic code.

It is unfair that such highly personal information about a person could be accessed and used by someone who is interested.

Even if people with certain genetic markers could potentially be a problem for society, whether it be a drain on medical resources, it is only fair that they have a chance to overcome these obstacles.

Whatever genetic research may lead to in the future, the legal framework for protecting the privacy rights of a person should be set today.

Predicting the class of '00

This is a special reprint of a column written by Stacy Feducia with an introduction by Michael Landauer, editor in chief and a senior journalism major. Feducia is a former Battalion columnist and a member of the Class of '93.

With every freshman class comes an onslaught of questions. When will they stop wearing their high school rings and Project Graduation shirts? When will they take down their tassel from their rear-view mirror?

But for the Class of 2000, there are some unique questions. And being different can be good. Last week, we at the Batt were faced with an odd question: What do we do when we're printing a letter in Mail Call by a fish? Do we use the '00 or go with the full 2000? Hearing that Fish Camp had dubbed the class "The Class of 'Double-0,'" we decided to go with the '00.

As I stumbled through the staff files, I found that this and other questions were raised by a former Battalion columnist by the name of Stacy Feducia. Known for writing columns about butt-cracks and her experiences on the assembly line at a tampon factory, Feducia made a name for herself on this very page.

On August 29, 1991, she took leave of her normal style to ask a few questions about a class that would be entering A&M five years later.

The following is the gist of that column, included mostly just for laughs. But as campaigning gets under way this week for the leadership of this unique class, a word of advice to the fish: Aggies are watching you. Whether it is Feducia or some future Aggie, the Class of 2000 will be viewed as a milestone and, with strong leadership, it will also be a proud example of what A&M has become.

Given that Fish Camp will no doubt be the first episode in an epic of endless trauma for the Class of 2000, I decided to address it first. For those of you unfamiliar with Fish Camp, a class hump-it is composed every year to celebrate class unity and Aggie Pride. This year's hump-it goes like this: "Fish Camp '91, Aggie Spirit, pride and fun. All the pieces come alive. The Fightin' Class of '95." Simple enough, but not when you throw in that troublesome Class of 2000. Being the responsible journalist and assuming they refer to themselves as the Class of 2000, I posed the question to members of our esteemed English department. Know what I found? Trauma! Confusion! Dismay!

"Surely there is a word that rhymes with 'thousand,'" pondered Dr. Robert Newman. "But I can't think of one, and now it will torment me all day."

I asked Dr. Janet McCann, a poet.

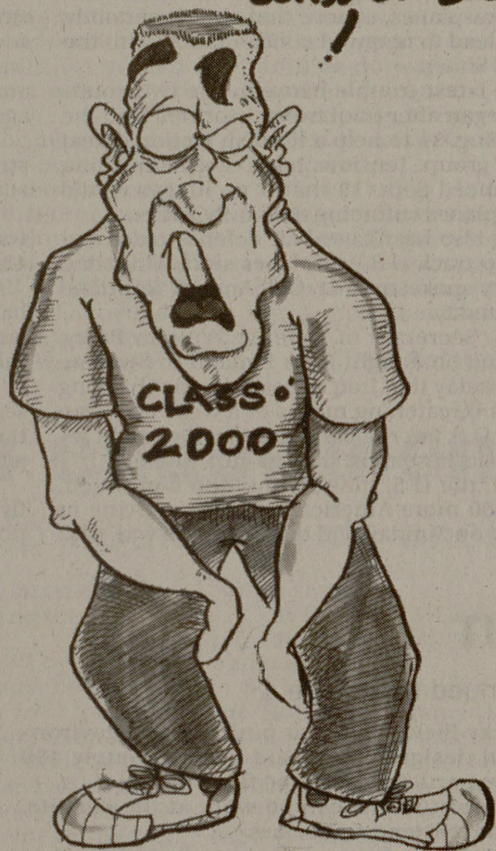
"In the Webster's Compact Rhyming Dictionary, no word rhymes with 'thousand,'" she said. "You could try a phrase like 'cows and.'" So I tried it.

Fish camp '96, Aggie Spirit really kicks. Beating all those Bevo cows and ... The Fightin' Class of 2000.

Let's face it: That sucks. Deciding those academicians were not close enough to the situation to be effective, I asked the real experts, the Fish Camp Staff.

"Oh, no! I'd never thought about it. Let me get some help," cried Cristen Van Vleet of the Class of '92. In the background, I heard distinct sounds of anguish and trauma, not to mention a lot of hysterical laughter. "Well, I don't know, but it really de-

"BEATING ALL THOSE BEVO COWS & ... THE FIGHTING CLASS OF 2000"



pends on the creativity of the people that year (the Fish Camp '96 Staff)," Van Vleet replied. "After all, the Class of 2000 is so unbelievably unique! You could do that big 2-0 or you could do double-0. You could do anything."

But it's not that easy when it comes to the Class of 2000 class set. Theoretically, those fish will do a set of ZERO push-ups at good bull events that mandate physical retribution. Of course asking them to do 2000 push-ups would be out of the question — they'd never get to turn out the lights at Midnight Yell. The Class of 2000 would still be pushing come kick-off the next day.

"Maybe they'd do a hundred. I don't know," offered Corps member Brandon Daugherty, Corps Commander John Sherman concurred, "It would be the prerogative for that class, but I'd suggest 100. However, they'd have to draw a line at some point for the classes after 2000."

The Corps of Cadets seems to have it under control for now. But in five years, this could be one of the most controversial issues since women for the Corps.

One big question still hovers on the horizon. HOW DO YOU PUT CLASS OF 2000 ON YOUR AGGIE RING?

"I never thought about that. Let me ask a higher authority," said Jackie Flowers, Aggie ring clerk. After a long, anguished delay, she returned with this answer: "As far as I know, we'd go with '00."

You heard it here first.



MAIL  
CALL

Armed forces gives many opportunities

I am a veteran of the United States Army that proudly served my country, my family and myself. I stood on our country's walls of freedom for three years, defending her against all enemies.

Whether or not I agreed with the reasoning behind my deployment, I followed the orders of those above me. I did not allow my political beliefs to stand in the way of my mission — to do that would have put lives in jeopardy. Along with every other soldier, I took the same oath to defend our country, and I was prepared to die for it.

There is no doubt that our government has made political statements with our military forces that cost American servicemen their lives, but do not let their memories go forgotten and tarnish the dreams of potential recruits.

I joined the military for two reasons — to gain financial assistance for college and to mature as a man.

I, too, remember my fallen brothers in arms being dragged through the streets of Mogadishu and going home in body bags from Kuwait. Do not let the government overshadow your view of American servicemen. I hope you join me in keeping our soldiers in Kuwait in your thoughts and prayers.

Joining the military under parental or religious pressure would be one of the last reasons anyone should join the military, but if you would like to be all you can be, see foreign lands, serve your country and be proud ... join the military.

Matthew D. Bustos  
Class of '98

Pride overshadows service in military

Regarding David Boldt's Sept. 18 column,

"Sheer obligation" is why many join the armed services. Sheer obligation, whether it is from your family, your pastor or your own sense of patriotism, turns into one thing when you join — pride. Pride in what you are doing: defending your country from threats, following orders, upholding the Constitution, and a host of other things that you swear to do when you enlist.

Being in the Army, I can attest to this. Most of the people killed in the military in the last ten years have been from special forces. We don't even know about most of them. The American soldier who was dragged through the streets of Mogadishu was a Ranger. He was sent in with a small group of men to kill a mafia leader. He joined because he was a fanatic. You've got to be a die-hard Army go-er to be in the Rangers.

Most of the men that join the army out of sheer obligation go in, serve their four years and leave, never seeing anything other than a boring military base in the states.

There is nothing wrong with serving out of obligation. But it's wrong to stereotype people who join out of obligation as having ultra-conservative parents. People join for many different reasons: money, advancement, ex-

perience, leadership qualities, seeing the world, and obligation. Oh yeah, and to fly jets.

Jason Ross  
Class of '98  
Corporal, United States Army

Government keeps real marriage intact

Congress takes step back in time? Bryan Goodwin suggests in his Sept. 17 column that a primary concern of the U.S. Congress in passing a bill denying the recognition of homosexual marriages is concern over money.

The issue is not about money, privileges or benefits. The real issue is one of basic morality — upholding the sacred institution of marriage. This institution is a lifelong union between a man and a woman based on unconditional love. We should not allow this formal union to be extended to homosexuals. Goodwin declares that this denies the right for homosexuals to declare their love. In this case, the fact is that the federal government is not denying anything to anyone. Simply put, it is preserving marriage the way God intended.

There is no prejudice involved here, no "victims" as Goodwin believes. Homosexuals, as individuals, have basic human rights of citizenship to live normally in our country.

However, marriage is not a right that can be granted or extended by our federal government. Thank God our legislators are doing their jobs while representing us morally and acting freely from the pressures of a small minority.

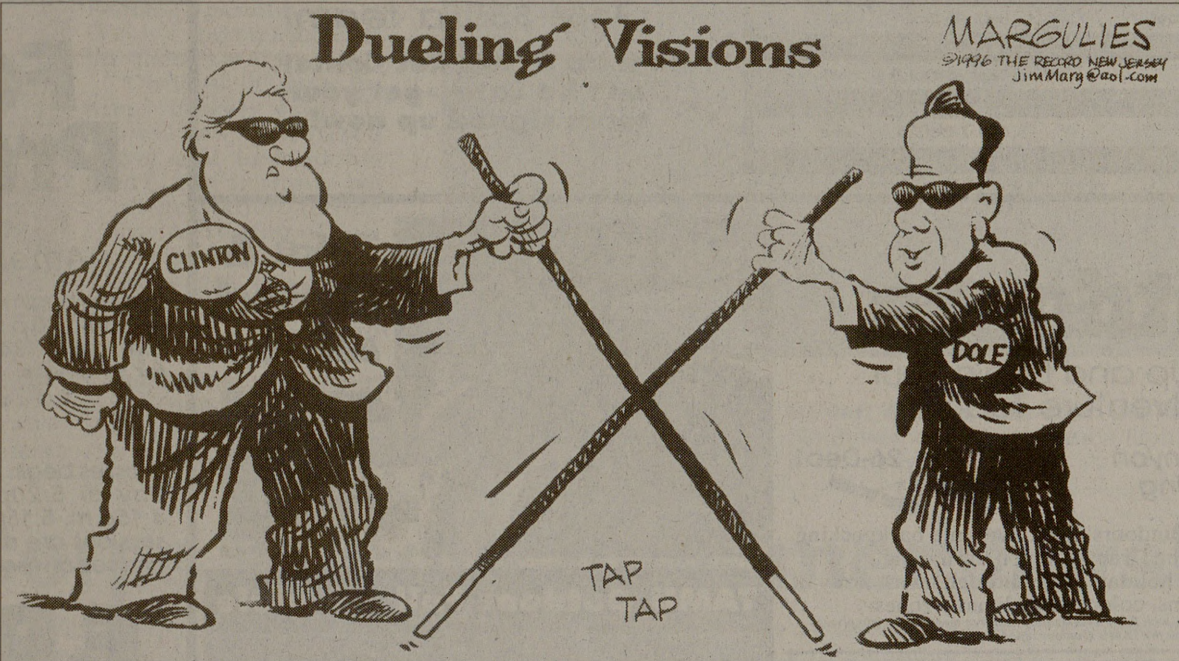
Hank Bullinger  
Class of '99

Ignorant students don't deserve vote

Marcus Goodyear is wrong. Every Aggie should not vote. The only people who deserve to vote are those who have taken the time to educate themselves. As it is, people will walk into a voting booth without knowing this information. They usually end up either picking names at random or voting for people based on name recognition.

Currently, incumbents win most races because they have the name recognition. So please, on election day, if you don't know who the candidates are, don't punch the holes. This is the first step toward bringing our government under our control.

Dave Deal  
Class of '98



Abortion case threatens to choose legality over morality

As if our national debate over abortion wasn't complicated enough, a story unfolding in a Wisconsin court could make the issue even more treacherous.

In the case, an act that all should recognize as horribly wrong is being defended in the name of reproductive freedom.

In March, 35-year-old Deborah Zimmerman entered a bar in Racine, Wis. and went on a drinking binge. She was nine months pregnant. Later that day, she gave birth to a baby girl with a blood alcohol level of 0.199 percent. That's twice the legal limit for an adult. The infant was born exhibiting the symptoms of fetal alcohol syndrome, and has been showing signs of impaired mental development.

Zimmerman was charged with attempted

Columnist



Jeremy Valdez  
Senior chemical  
engineering major

murder. The county prosecutor alleges that she tried to kill her unborn baby with alcohol. Zimmerman has pleaded not guilty.

It would be believable for her to claim that her drinking binge was a symptom of alcoholism; an overwhelming addiction might explain her actions, although it wouldn't excuse them. But instead, a public defender named Sally Hoezel has concocted a scary — and highly political — defense.

The defense asserts that Zimmerman's actions were not criminal because Wisconsin law does not recognize an unborn child as a viable human being. Also, Hoezel claims that Zimmerman's actions are actually protected by the landmark *Roe vs. Wade* decision.

"Had she in fact killed her unborn child, she would be exempt from prosecution," Hoezel said in an interview on CNN. "Under our abortion law, a mother can't be prosecuted."

Joan Korb, the assistant district attorney prosecuting the case, takes a different view in light of the late stage of the pregnancy. She argues that the *Roe* decision

says "the state has an interest in protecting the life of a viable fetus."

So, as the litigants await the court's decision, ethicists are left to ponder the consequences of the verdict.

The wave of speculation has washed into the college community. Ethics specialist Robin Shapiro of the University of Washington asked where lines would be drawn in the future unless a precedent is established to punish future behavior.

The true issue hidden in Shapiro's query is whether or not we, as thinking students and participating citizens, can draw lines at all.

Some worry that if Zimmerman's actions are found to be illegal, any woman who sips any alcohol at any point in a pregnancy will be subject to the wrath of the law.

According to this misguided line of thinking, Wisconsin should ignore Zimmerman's act. After all, there isn't a law that specifically says, "Thou shalt not poison a fetus with alcohol."

Instead, Wisconsin should trust that its judges can distinguish between alcohol

use and abuse, and hold people responsible for their actions.

How sad it is that sometimes our moral compasses point only to "legal" or "illegal," having totally forsaken "right" and "wrong."

Deborah Zimmerman is probably both criminal and victim. Perhaps she didn't intend to kill her unborn daughter on what became her birthday.

She may be more the pitiable, reckless addict than the would-be murderer. But according to her own defense attorney, Zimmerman's motivations don't matter. The notion of abortion on demand allows her to abuse herself and poison her fetus.

Today, it is politically fashionable to say abortion should be "safe, legal, and rare." But if a reproductive rights argument exonerates a woman who may have tried to poison her daughter just hours before birth, what could we say to legitimize this kind of "abortion" procedure?

Would it be safe? No. Would it be rare? Maybe not. But, sadly, it would definitely be legal.

The Battalion encourages letters to the editor. Letters must be 300 words or fewer and include the author's name, class, and phone number.

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For more details on letter policy, please call 845-3313 and direct your question to the opinion editor.