

Traditions traditionally perpetuate stupidity

Warning: The Surgeon General has decreed that blind adherence to tradition causes dullwittedness, herd mentality and bad livers.

Okay, the Surgeon General didn't really say that, but she would if she ever visited Texas A&M. She might require a warning label pasted on every Bonfire pot, Sbsisa tray and Aggie ring.

Beginning with Fish Camp and continuing into the first few semesters, freshmen entering A&M are inculcated with a dose of Aggie spirit, much in the same way that elementary schools pound patriotism and citizenship into the skulls of children.

The freshmen learn about our hatred for the University of Texas, referred to lovingly as t.u., and our love for Bonfire, symbolizing our "burning desire to beat the hell outta t.u."

Sure, Bonfire is cool, but why do we want to beat the hell out of the University of Texas? Are Longhorns so different that we must shun them, so terrible that we must burn them in effigy in order to satisfy our self-righteousness? Sounds closer to paranoia than school spirit.

Yes, the idea of Bonfire reveals an Aggie inferiority complex. Bonfire resembles a phallic symbol more and more with each passing year, and we are always reminded that ours is bigger than everyone else's.

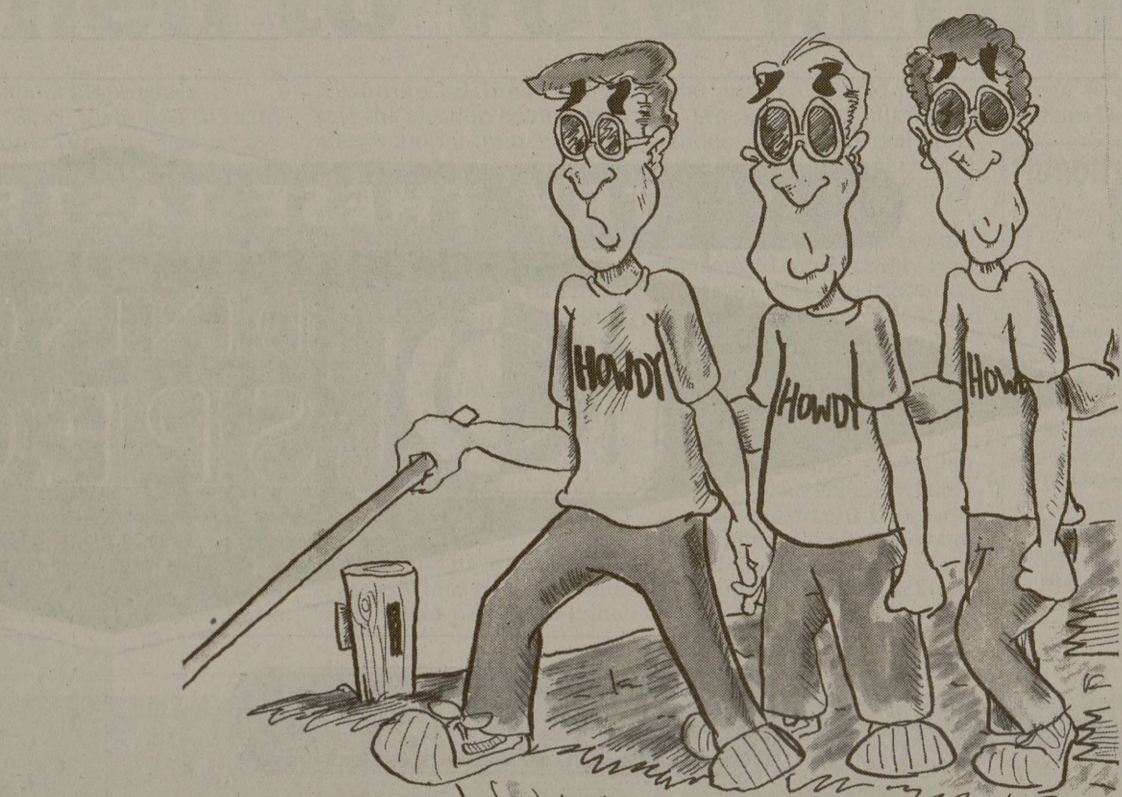
The funny thing is, Bonfire is actually a binding force at A&M, uniting us in a common, if somewhat misguided, cause. Perhaps Aggies could direct that positive energy toward building houses for Habitat for Humanity. With 43,000 students, we can build entire Habitat neighborhoods. B.T.H.O.H.F.H. would be the redpots' cry.

Another pointless-and-negative-tradition stronghold is Sbsisa, the home Sbsisa yell. Sbsisa yell begins with hall yells and quickly regresses to food fights and insults. Physical confrontations often occur, leaving some wondering whether the point of Sbsisa yell is not to demonstrate school spirit, but to pick fights with rival dorms.

What constructive end does the lovely tradition of throwing wadded-up napkins at the pretty women getting ice cream at the freezer case serve? Historically, women have shown little interest in such outbursts of sexism and childishness. But, sadly, this is the single-most effective way the assailants can get women to look at them.

Even though Sbsisa yell adds to the Food Service employees' already-immense workload, the second lunchroom tradition is the more disturbing. Complimenting women with catcalls and projectiles does little to raise the self esteem of anybody involved. Worse is the objectification of women that results from this harmful tradition.

Finally, there is the ultimate tradition of Aggieland: Se-



nior rings and ring dunking. Every semester, hundreds of eager Aggies trot off to one of the numerous bars in town and proceed to dunk their rings in pitchers of beer. The theory behind this tradition is that after 4 years (or five or six), our tolerance for alcohol has skyrocketed, leaving behind alcoholics who continually drink to get a buzz. Thankfully, even the state of Texas recognized the danger in this silly tradition. Although seniors may whine about the Texas Alcoholic Beverage Commission cracking down on their freedoms, their bodies and minds will thank the T.A.B.C. later for the enforced moderation. Why do we do these things if they are so harmful? The stock answer to that question is because they are traditions — they are a part of A&M. History proves the danger inherent in blindly adhering to tradition. Until 1910 or so, the Chinese had a tradition of binding women's feet so they remained 3 to 5 inches long. The process involved folding toes and breaking arches, and was excruciatingly painful. When asked why this was nec-

essary, the men replied that small feet and their effect on mobility sexually aroused them, and the practice had been around for 1,000 years. In Africa's Sudan region, the tradition is even more cruel. To ensure virginity, the practice of fibulation is performed on young women. The procedure involves a village elder sewing up the young woman's vagina. Again tradition is one of the driving forces in perpetuating this atrocity. A&M's traditions pale in comparison to violating basic human rights. However, the principle still applies: Do not perpetuate destructive and harmful practices just because that's the way it's always been done. Try perpetuating helpful and creative traditions. Bonfire, Sbsisa yell and even the alcoholic ring dunking are harmful and frivolous. Perhaps, as the world progresses further toward some sort of unity, Aggies might help it along by forgetting the old, childish and wasteful traditions of yesteryear and adopt more fully the creative and nurturing traditions of activities like Big Event and Replant. Hey, without Bonfire it would just be Plant.

Conjecture results in confusion

It looks like a duck and quacks like a duck, then it must be a duck. If beer prices are changed in the middle of the night, then the steady owner is out to screw us. Perception is always reality. Or is it?

Two weeks ago, my roommate and I decided to go to the Texas Hall of Fame for the Bonfire benefit. Of course we love Bonfire, but we had heard that pitchers of beer were \$1.50 that night. So we took our laundry money and headed off. When we arrived, however, we learned that pitchers were no longer \$1.50, but now could only be assumed for a nasty \$4.50. I was pissed. Out of sheer greed, managers, owners, or whoever was in charge, had raised the price in the middle of the night. I immediately began investigating — I was going to have this steady villain's head on a platter. I didn't wait to expose this atrocity and screw his business. So I found out who the owner was and called to get some answers. "The original deal was that we would have \$1.50 pitchers until 9 o'clock," said Paul Emola, co-owner of the Texas Hall of Fame. "I didn't even charge them (pitchers) until 9 o'clock." "We try real hard to work with the Aggies in every way we can," he said. "I'm... oops. My arrogance I had made the assumption that this business was trying to suck money out of Aggies motivated for Bonfire, when it was simply a matter of miscommunication. An assumption is defined as anything taken for granted. Obviously, the assumptions are well made, assuming a guy wearing senior status on campus is in the Corps. There are many assumptions we make that are destructive. Coming back from All-University night earlier this fall, the freshmen in my outfit were circled up around our outfit guidon (flag) to "guard" it. They were yelling and screaming out of sheer motivation they had "guarded" it successfully when a group of nonregs happened to walk by. The nonregs, assuming that the cadets were yelling at them, began reacting with obnoxiousness. However, the fish in the pews had no idea the nonregs were even there. The two groups clashed without major conflict, but the Corps relations were left slightly scarred — all because of a bad assumption. When people find out I write The Battalion, I sometimes get reactions like, "Oh, you're one of those liberal types that aren't like A&M." They assume that just because I am an opinion columnist, Chris Stidvent is my best buddy. On the other hand, the first time I walked into the newsroom in uniform I got some really weird looks. "What the heck is that CT doing in the newsroom?" some thought. "I'll carrier Jerry Smiley's pants." "He looks like a right-wing militant who would walk around campus shouting at everything." Bad assumptions, including stereotypes, are usually made based on emotions. And thinking with our emotions often gets us into trouble. The ancient Greeks used the word *harmartia* to describe harmony between intellect and emotion. A person possessing *harmartia* was said to have a well-balanced life. If we think and act based more on our intellect and less on our emotions, then bad assumptions don't begin to thin out of our lives. All of us should strive to achieve *harmartia*. We should realize that we don't always know exactly what is going on behind the scenes, and things aren't always what they seem. We need to educate ourselves about a matter before jumping to conclusions. The key to avoiding bad assumptions is always having an open mind. But that just may be an assumption.



David Boldt
 Senior management and marketing major



Patrick Smiley
 Sophomore zoology major

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MAIL CALL

Guns provide the means for defense

Regarding Bryan Goodwin's Oct. 1 column, "United States shoots itself in the foot."

Once again, ignorance in the media rears its ugly head. Goodwin's obvious lack for understanding basic English phrases became apparent in his column. Ironic for an English major, don't you think?

The first part of the Second Amendment says, "A well regulated militia, being necessary to the security of a free State," stands as a qualifier, not an exclusion, to the rest of the statement. In the late 18th century, militias were defined as all able-bodied men available to fight. They were not organized by the government for its defense, as are the Reserves and the National Guard. They existed only in times of need, for the defense of the people against the government. As Thomas Jeffer-

son duly noted, "The most effective way to enslave a people, is to first disarm them."

Until we focus on the real problem of criminal conduct and lack of personal responsibility, we will continually be insulted with remarks like Goodwin's that liken firearm ownership to drug abuse. If the day ever comes that Goodwin is faced with protecting his life, property, or family from a burglar, rapist or tyrannical government, with his trusty Swiss Army Knife, I can offer him only these two pieces of advice. I told you so, and good luck.

Joe Benningfield
 Class of '99

Bonfire cut unifies disparate groups

I would like to extend my heartfelt thanks to Dunn Hall for inviting Phi Kappa Theta to help build the hell outta Bonfire last weekend. The crewchiefs and residents of

Dunn Hall showed amazing enthusiasm in helping bridge the gap between Greeks and nonregs.

To be honest, we were at first a bit intimidated by the "NO Greeks" pots, the "Rent A Friend" T-shirts and the other anti-Greek sentiments resulting from this gap. It was wonderful, though, to realize that Dunn Hall and Phi Kappa Theta both understood that we are all building the same Bonfire, for the same University and for all Aggies — Corps, nonregs, OCA's and Greeks alike.

A. Peter Shukis III
 Class of '99
 Phi Kappa Theta Associate
 Member Class President
 Accompanied by 16 signatures

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

The opinion editor reserves the right to edit letters for length, style, and accuracy. Letters may be submitted in person at 013 Reed McDonald with a valid student ID. Letters may also be mailed to:
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 For more details on letter policy, please call 845-3313 and direct your question to the opinion editor.

Never deny education

Who says our tax dollars are ill-spent? Last week, the House of Representatives passed a bill that allows states to deny children of illegal immigrants a public education. The ignoramuses who support this bill think it will discourage illegal immigration and ease taxpayer expenses.

There have been many attempts to pass outrageous bills up on Capitol Hill, but this has got to be the doozy of them all. Don't get me wrong, I am not pro-illegal immigration. But if this legislation becomes law, there will be hell to pay.

Aside from the problem of the country making a moral decision to punish innocent children for no good reason, if Congress foolishly overrides a sure presidential veto, we will all suffer — not just illegal aliens.

The best way to ensure an explosion of crime and disease is to deny children of illegal immigrants an education.

Just imagine what the country will look like in 10 years when the children of our 3.5 million undocumented immigrants become teenagers.

We Aggies will be in the process of building our families and careers in an America where there will be millions of unvaccinated, uneducated and probably angry teenagers. Hmm. Can you see crime? Can you see disease?

If you cannot, you need to open your eyes.

Some might yell, "We have a staggering deficit! We can't afford to take this burden!" But, although it costs about \$62,000 to educate a child through the 12th grade in a public school, it costs about that much per year to incarcerate some individuals. Upon doing the math, the question clearly changes from "how can we afford it?" to "how can we not afford it?"



Aja Henderson
 Senior political science major

So, now the big wigs who puff their chests out and talk big talk about getting tough on immigration think they have won a battle against the evil immigrants. Why, Newt Gingrich has even said that this joke-of-a-bill will send a clear message to immigrants that America is not going to take care of them!

But illegal immigrants will always come here as long as someone is hiring them.

Isn't it ironic that businesses are so often left out of the criticism?

A look back in history reveals that from the very first immigration bill this country passed, these laws have been conveniently relaxed and designed with loopholes which allow American businesses to hire illegal immigrants, especially in the agricultural industry. How else would America remain the largest supplier of food (and cheap food, at that) in the world? Surely it's not because we have a lot of farmers.

These businesses pull benefits from illegal workers and, indirectly, we all benefit every time we head to Albertson's.

But no one talks about that. Instead, we get a dose of rhetoric on the benefits the United States will gain from denying the children of illegal immigrants a public education.

How can this bill be the answer when the economic contributions from illegal immigrants benefit our country so greatly? Illegal immigrants are coming and staying over here for a reason, and it is not just so they can hold out their hands for some food stamps or line up their kids for the school bus.

The key to stopping the tide of illegal immigration is to penalize perpetrators, such as the businesses who greedily exploit undocumented immigrants with the help of Uncle Sam. Cruelly denying children an education is far too dangerous — and perhaps even deadly — for our nation.

The best way to ensure an explosion of crime and disease is to deny children of illegal immigrants an education.