

New pizza proves low on taste

Change is almost always exciting. The prospect of a new type of food being served in a dining facility famous for the food year in and year out is extremely exciting.

Columnist



Patrick Smiley
Sophomore zoology major

Sbsia introduced its highly touted new line of pizza on Monday, the culmination of three weeks of speculation, fantasizing, and constant invocation of the name, "Stone Willy."

The hype surrounding this new product at Sbsia will not prevent impending disappointments both the dining hall and the pizza. This is not the answer to our prayers of good food, just a temporary stop to quell growing dissatisfaction with the current selection of food.

The real problem is that nearly every entree comes smothered in the sort of artery-clogging gravy, meat sauce or fatty bacon. Healthier alternatives are either too bland or too strange to attract the average diner.

But these doubts aside, many people were amazed that the diners actually listened to some complaints made over the years. The cries of "Stone Willy" resounded throughout Sbsia like "Remember the Alamo" at the Battle of San Jacinto. It was a source of inspiration, hope and wonder.

We wondered who this Willy was. Some valiant Aggie perfected the art of pizza-making while fighting the enemy in some godforsaken land? A world famous Italian chef that we were before ignorant of? Or was he, some of my skeptical friends promptly suggested, Willie Nelson? Well, that would explain the name Stone Willy, given Mr. Nelson's penchant for illegal herbs.

The reality is far less satisfying. Stone Willy turns out to be a franchise operation, selling the concept of its pizza to cafeterias around the country. Nevertheless, the coming of Stone Willy brightened the smiles of all those fortunate enough to eat in Sbsia, the only dining hall as yet blessed with Stone Willy's Legendary Pizza.

Monday at 10:15 a.m., several students, including me, hungrily awaited the beginning of lunch and the first bite of delicious pizza. Judgment day had arrived.

We entered Sbsia as we had done hundreds of times before. Everything looked the same. There were no velvet drapes, marble-tiled floors or mahogany dining tables. The milk dispensers still dispensed milk and not some glorious golden liquid. The dessert case still held the same old Jell-O — no Baked Alaska to speak of.

Suddenly, pure white light blinded me, and a voice ordered me to the light. At the other end of the light lay Stone Willy, savior of our buds. So peaceful, so beautiful, draped so appropriately in white, stood Stone Willy, purveyor of Legendary Pizza.

Entranced by the splendor of Stone Willy, we took the pizza, monolithically huge though it was, and sat down. Everyone looked on in awe at the cheesy goodness of the morsel which Willy the Merciful so graciously allowed us to partake.

One bite and the trance was gone. The pizza's true form was revealed, and it turned out to be the same damned pizza from three weeks ago. The Stone Willy shrine at the other end of the dining hall was a cheap facade, required by the Stone Willy company (a subsidiary of Little Charlie's pizza, found in the frozen food section at Sam's Wholesale) in the contract made with Food Services. There is no paradise in Sbsia, only boring old cafeteria food.

The pizza, although actually edible, did not fix what was real wrong: bland food with few healthy, edible alternatives. Our disappointment was profound. In the excitement surrounding Stone Willy, we had been duped into believing that old dining hall adage: "Dining on campus is fun."

What fools we were, what fools...

Technology can't substitute for the human touch

New waves of shiny plastic smart machines with LCD displays, radio transceivers and full-e-mail capability have come to stroke our short attention spans. These new communication tools aren't making us into a friendlier, better-adjusted society.

Instead, they're turning us into a society of people with a million different ways to say "there's nothing on my mind."

The information age is making it easier for us to communicate with each other. But technology is making our conversations less personal, even if they are slightly more convenient.

Pagers, cellular phones, e-mail and even voice-mail: these are the pipelines from which business information flows. And ultimately they'll be the most common ways to chat with the folks at home.

But there's a conflict and a seductive trade-off present in today's communication philosophy. Discussion is supposed to bring people together, but we love the way new technology allows us to talk with people without actually seeing them whenever we want, wherever they are.

We're suckering ourselves into believing that reaching more people faster is as good as finding more depth in the discussions we already have.

At the risk of sounding like my grandparents, there is much to be said for the human touch. That is something that's sorely lacking in the newest form of mail.

The personality content in a

handwritten letter is much greater than that present in a few bytes of e-mail. The attempts to make e-mail more personable are well-meaning, but are really an insult to the texture of human emotions. For instance, it's pretty sad :- (to think what passes for a smile :-) nowadays.

It isn't surprising that phones and computers can't do anything magical to amplify the importance of the messages we entrust them with. They are, after all, just machines. And there is a certain amount of merit to just gabbing for no good reason.

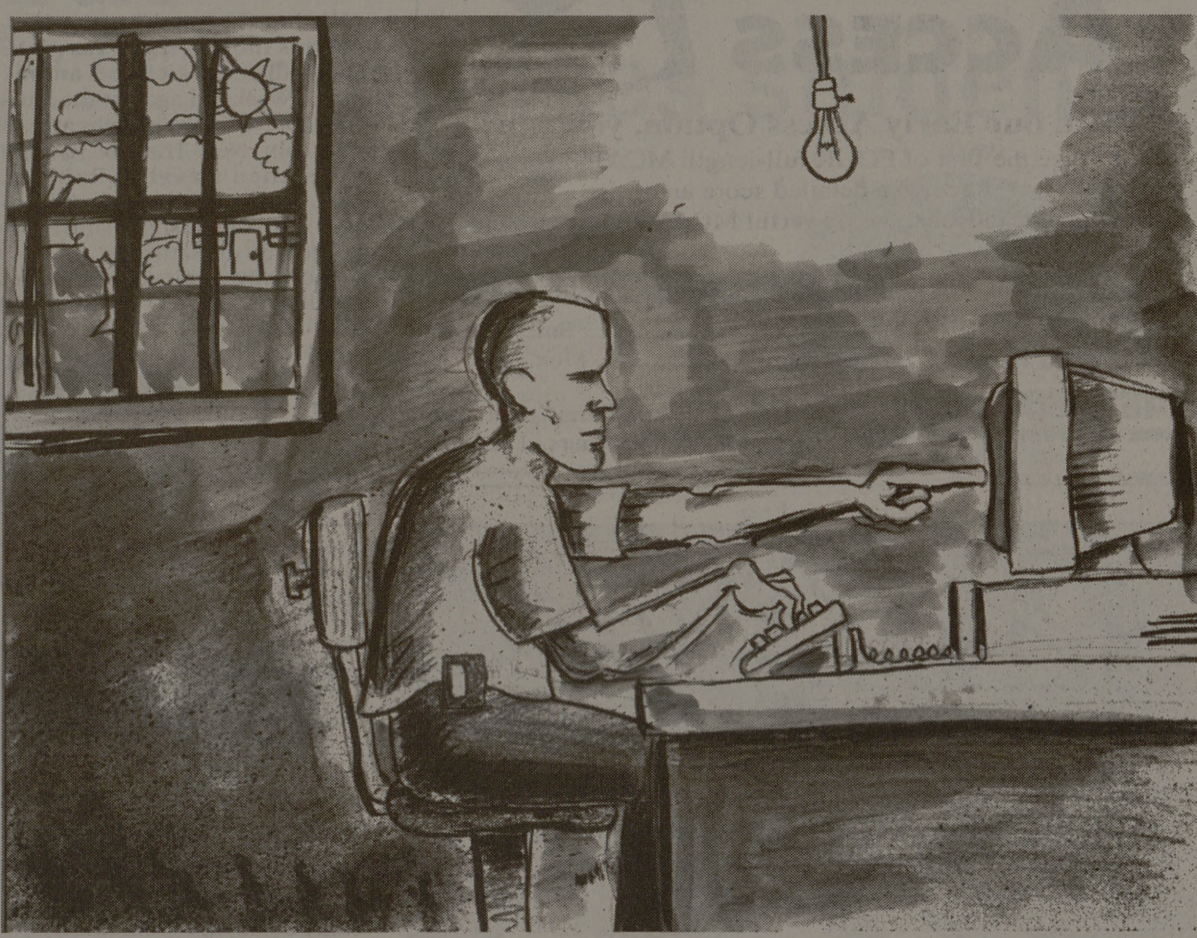
But it is sad to walk into a campus computer lab at 3 a.m. and find a bunch of students typing away, talking to virtual friends. Some people spend so much time at a terminal, they might as well drive up to say howdy to their compubuddies.

Humans are social animals. We've always thought that our ability to communicate is what makes us social.

However, the essence of society isn't mere communication — it's inspiration. Something has to inspire a society to be more than just a collection of individuals; methods of communication serve only to disseminate that inspiration.

If all that can be said about our new means of communication is that they're convenient, that's really not enough to warrant the excitement we've been displaying. What's so thrilling about an E-Z Mart?

If only we spent as much energy adding meaning to our conversa-



tions as we do finding new ways to conduct them.

So as we rush to get wired and connected, we need to ask what it is that inspires us to communicate. Politicians and current events generally don't, more and more of our families are dysfunctional, and we aren't answering any phone calls from God lately. So what does move us?

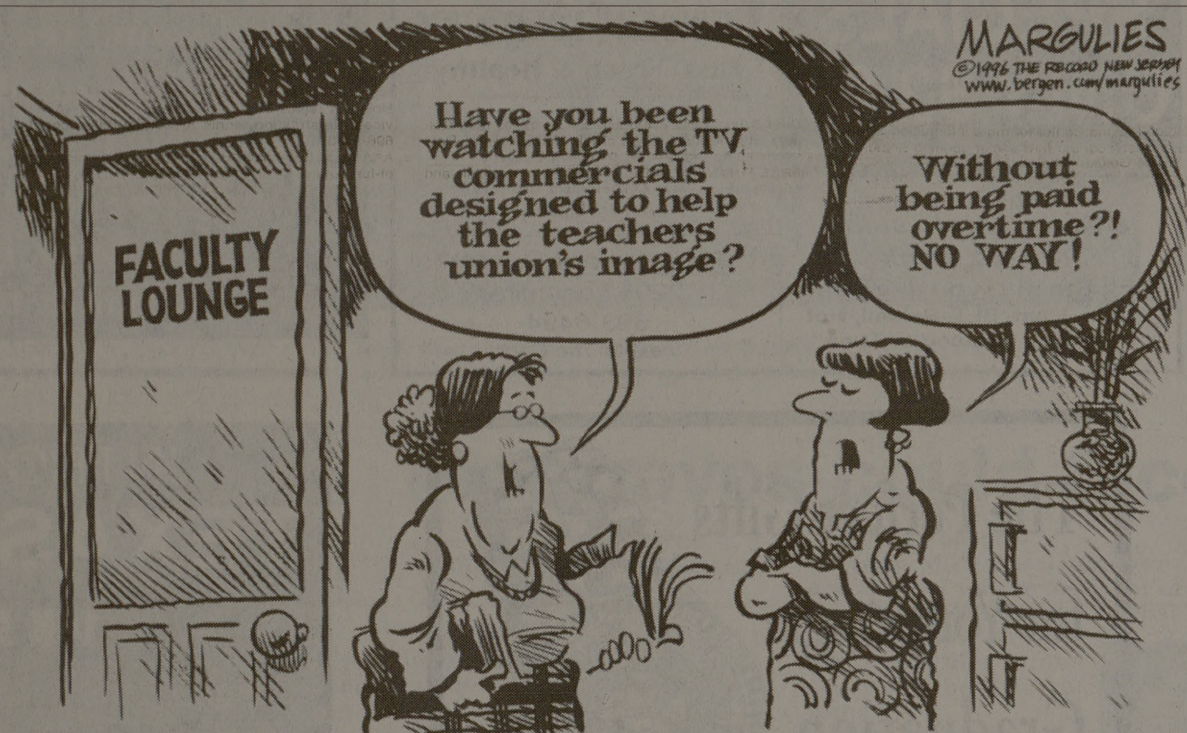
It seems as if every few years our collective consciousness asks for the source of our motivations. In the last decade, the common answer seemed to be: "Me!"

But after realizing that materialism and self-interest could take us only so far, we now search for some response that's a little more sophisticated and open-minded. Today we answer the same ques-

tion by shrugging our collective shoulders, looking around at each other, and asking, "Us?"

It is this confusion that makes individuals eager to get to know "us" by the fastest means available. So we page and e-mail each other into an endless sea of chatter. The messages are rather cool and fluffy, but there's a ton of them.

Sort of like E-Z Marts.



Racing hormones keep Howdy alive

I wish I'd been born a girl. I could wear pink shirts without being considered effeminate. I could actually open the mail I get from the American Association of University Women addressed to Ms. Shannon Halbrook. I've always been curious about what's stuffed into those plain white envelopes "for women only."

But best of all, I could walk around on this campus without feeling like its traditions had passed me by.

A couple weeks ago, I was ambling along outside the library, my backpack slung over one shoulder. In front of me was — in this order — a girl, then a guy, and then another girl. In an absolutely objective sense, both the girls were fairly attractive.

Then a big, butch-looking member of the Corps of Cadets walked by in the opposite direction. And this is what happened.

He said a vigorous "Howdy," to the first girl, skipped strangely over the guy in between, and then said "Howdy" again to the second girl. When he got to me he was looking away; I said "Howdy" and he walked past wordlessly.

I've noticed it from numerous cadets. Not all of them, of course — I've heard that generalization is a bad thing to do in opinion columns and somehow detracts from their credibility. But I have directly observed it several times, and more often than not cadets are the perpetrators.

It's a phenomenon I've dubbed "hormones." And basically it involves the fact that people are more likely to say howdy to an attractive member of the opposite sex.

Not that this phenomenon is a bad thing, necessarily. It's a great method to start up a conversation. It gives people a nice, two-word template for talking to anyone on campus or elsewhere in Bryan-College Station.

Columnist



Shannon Halbrook
Junior English major

Boy: "Howdy."
Girl: "Howdy."
And when an attractive member of the opposite sex walks by, starting up a conversation is, well, not the first thing on everybody's mind. But it's the most traditional way to go about the process that concludes with one of the first few things on a lot of people's minds.

This got me to thinking about how safe Aggie land's traditions really are — they're ingrained in the chemicals of the human body.

We always hear the howdy tradition is dying, rapidly going the way of abstractions such as morality and family values and chivalry. Good Ags incessantly moan in Mail Calls how they walked across campus yesterday afternoon and not a single person flashed them the toothy Aggie greeting.

But as long as there are women here, this is one tradition that'll never die out. I've even been guilty of doing it for prurient interests. And I hardly have the massive, masculine stubble of Ol' Sarge.

It is hard to see how the howdy tradition survived for so long back in Ol' Army days when no women attended A&M.

But the feminine presence on campus is pretty much here to stay, and it ensures the existence of the tradition.

Hormones safeguard other traditions, too. For instance, one calls for football spectators in Kyle Field to kiss every time the team makes a touchdown. For Aggies who do this, there's a personal benefit in preserving the tradition.

Maybe we're all selfish in that way. But as long as guys on campus hope that saying "Howdy" to an attractive woman might give them a chance to get a second glance, they'll keep saying it.

This got me to thinking about how safe Aggie land's traditions really are — they're ingrained in the chemicals of the human body.



Rights infringed by 'don't ask, don't tell'

Regarding David Boldt's Oct. 16 column, "Homosexual cadets should stay in closet":

Sadly enough, I wasn't surprised one bit by Boldt's column. Obviously, the view that homosexuals should adhere to the "don't ask, don't tell" policy is a conservative view, and most likely well supported by many students of this fine University.

However, the argument that a homosexual should stay in the closet while in the Corps, or in the military for that matter, because it will "disrupt the harmony and camaraderie of the Corps" is absolutely ridiculous.

That argument was the very same one used during the Civil War when President Lincoln allowed African-Americans into the military. It was the same excuse used when the military decided to integrate those black squadrons with white squadrons, and it was the very same objection men had when the military decided to allow women in the armed services.

When will it end? When will people realize that every person who wishes to serve his country in the armed services should be allowed to do so, and whatever differences they have with their fellow men in arms should be expressed with pride and dignity.

This would be more like the America we've all come to know and love, the one that accepts everyone for all their differences and is not afraid to display those differences to the world.

That would prove a far superior gesture than one that says, "If you're different, don't tell me and I won't ask."

Imagine if you were not allowed to display your love of God in any form because it might upset other students. Even elementary school children are allowed to wear crosses to represent their faith.

Likewise, all people, no matter where they work or what they do, should be allowed to display their own personalities, their differences, and the things that make them who they are.

War on Drugs costs devastate citizens

Regarding Chris Cox's October 16 Mail Call, "Drug legalization endangers morality":

Supporting the legalization of drugs — i.e. mood altering chemicals — is often erroneously characterized by opponents as an immoral and unethical stance. But people with specific character flaws are prone to abuse drugs and no law has the ability to curb a person's desire to abuse drugs. In most cases, current laws reinforce the desire even though they may temporarily inhibit the ability.

The cost of the War on Drugs to law-abiding citizens in lost wages, property, liberty and lives has been far more devastating to our society than that incurred by drug abusers. Because drugs are illegal, prices are exorbitant. Consequently, the incentives to addict innocent adolescents and children far outweigh the pain of punishment. This is the price society pays for attempting to thwart the wills of a few weak adults.

Oddly, in the minds of many, repealing drug laws has moral and ethical implications. But their support of the systematic destruction of society, by ineffective and counterproductive legislation, is immune from moral and ethical judgment. I question the morality and ethics of any person who intentionally ignores the societal devastation wrought by the War on Drugs.

Jeffery Peterson
Class of '93, '96

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Justin Vincent
Class of '98