

Yeltsin loses in game of Russian roulette

Boris Yeltsin's pathetic decision to remove his popular and aggressive heir apparent, General Alexander Lebed, can only be bad for Russia. The national security chief's dismissal not only opens the door for renewed fighting in Chechnya, but undermines any remaining credibility the government may have had among the public.

But the removal of post-Soviet Russia's most popular — and most powerful — political animal was not in direct response to Yeltsin's televised accusations of insubordination. Rather, it was a product of Yeltsin's irrational and paranoid fear of being upstaged by an underling and a testament to the desperation with which the Russian president projects his transparent illusion of control.

But how much actual control does Yeltsin yield during his back-breaking 15-minute workdays? It seems his duties have been minimized to rubber-stamping decisions made by his cabinet and signing decrees of dismissal. He isn't doing that comical dance that was televised during his campaign stop at a Moscow rock concert earlier this year.

But kicking Lebed out of the Kremlin split Yeltsin and his government's last bastions of support. And it looks like Lebed took most of that support back to his own countryside *dacha*. So

until the next election, the post-Soviet republic must settle for a relatively incapacitated and unpopular leader.

For the Russian people, last week's televised signing of Lebed's dismissal was a rare glimpse of their frail president. Yeltsin has been quietly "resting" at a health spa awaiting heart surgery. But even after he goes under the knife, he will continue to refrain from assuming his full-time duties until mid-1997. That's a long time for any country — especially Russia — to be without its constitutionally elected leader. Too long, in fact.

As a result, Russia will continue to flip the three-sided coin of democratic capitalism, communism and outright anarchy as Yeltsin's remaining cabinet ministers squabble for de facto control of the country.

To prevent this incessant infighting, the vodka-loving president should have dismissed himself by resigning long ago. Just as Yeltsin's own heart continues to deteriorate, so too does his beloved Russia. And without Lebed to assure the Chechens of the Russian government's promise of peace, fighting is likely to break out within a short period of time.

The Russian people deserve so much better after centuries of autocratic rule under the czars and more than 70 years of Bolshevik tyranny. There is a tragic history of terror like none we can fully comprehend.

And once again, they can only wait for the Bolshoi Ballet's performance of "Swan Lake" to come across the air waves, which always signified the death of a leader in the Soviet days of old.

But whether Yeltsin dies in office or the regularly scheduled



election in 2000 comes first, Lebed will undoubtedly ascend to the throne which sits below the double-headed eagle crest of the pre-Bolshevik czars. Only then will Russia have the opportunity to move past the political stagnation and economic decline caused by Yeltsin's stubbornness.

Lebed's short tenure as national security chief proved that he can rally popular support for

his policies and actively pursue their implementation. Admittedly, he has authoritarian and nationalistic tendencies. But successful peace negotiations in Chechnya are one example of his masterful and level-headed leadership abilities.

For now, though, the Russian people have no choice but to sit patiently as reform is postponed yet again.

Professors deserve a little more respect

It's right around midterm time, and the complaints about unreasonable professors are piling up along with mountains of projects, papers and tests.

And most likely, we will point to Dr. "I-Don't-Care-If-You-Won't-Have-A-Life-With-This-Workload" as the source of our woes.

But after listening to the same complaints about professors again and again, I wonder whether or not it really is their fault that our lives are so miserable.

Maybe it's the result of one too many iced cappuccinos before class, or maybe the flickering fluorescent lights have had some strange hypnotic effect on my train of thought, but I can't help but feel sorry for what many of our professors have to put up with from rude students.

Imagine what it must be like to deal with members of the Battalion Fan Club on a daily basis, who prefer to flip through the pages of the paper rather than listen to what you have to say in lecture.

How frustrating it must be to stare into a sea of faces that resemble the living dead when you ask if they have any questions, and then hear the same students complain endlessly that the material wasn't covered sufficiently after receiving bad exam grades.

And what could be more aggravating than hearing a multitude of books slamming and backpacks zipping eight minutes before class is even over?



Columnist  
**Jenni Howard**  
 Senior economics and international studies major

For some professors, it could be 400 pairs of eyes that stare at the clock and the students who furiously bang their watches on their desks to see if they've stopped.

There are, of course, exceptions to every generalization, like the professors who ask "After having read Chapters 10 through 75 for today's lecture, does anyone know the

meaning of life? And if so, how could we tie this information to the causes of the Civil War, World War II and the rate of acceleration on the planet Mars?"

But for the most part, some of us (myself included) could make a stronger effort toward achieving the expectations that were only made for our own good.

The syllabus is a good place to start. Contrary to popular belief, the syllabus is not solely a source of information on how much your grade will suffer as a result of that test you just bombed nor is it a reference to how many chapters you have to read by tomorrow morning's midterm. When used properly, it can serve as a helpful guide to what will be covered in class.

At the risk of sounding like I need a really good recommendation for grad school, if we're going to take the time to go to class, we might as well make the most of it. Cutting our professors a little slack every now and then might make that excruciatingly painful process of learning a little bit more enjoyable.

Now put down your Battalion — class is almost over.

Students don't think and drive

To err is human, but to really screw up you have to be a college student.

When a student bounces a check, he seems to better manage his money by creating a budget. After a coed fails an exam, she seems that one must prepare for life's challenges. By learning from early mistakes, young adults can become more productive members of society.

However, college students often fail to recognize the crime they are committing until it is too late.

Take drinking, for example. Texas A&M students take pride in the unofficial statistic that more beer is consumed per capita in College Station than anywhere in the United States. Many even brag that Harvey Road is the number-one site for Drunken While Intoxicated arrests in the state.

reports that on a normal day in the United States, 2 percent of the vehicles on the road are driven by intoxicated people. On weekend nights, the national average is 10 percent. Because this is a beer-guzzling college town, one suspects that twice as many drivers may commit this crime on the crazy weekend nights, meaning one out of every five drivers is likely drunk on a Thursday, Friday or Saturday night in College Station.

Why are so many Texas A&M students drinking and driving? Many students drink and drive because they don't comprehend the possible consequences. It is sad that everyone knows that alcohol and driving ruins careers, tears families apart and kills innocent people, yet people never think it will ever happen to them. Lives are wasted when ignorant young adults do not see the terrible wrong when they get behind the wheel of an automobile after drinking.

When a student bounces a check or fails a test, the consequence is immediately seen in the form of a late fee by the bank or an "F" on the report card. But the consequences of drinking and driving are not that obvious.

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Instead of worrying about the lives put into jeopardy, the typical student only worries about getting a DWI. People worry that DWI ticket will make their driving records look bad or will upset their parents, instead of worrying about all the other people out on the road.

Since UPD has other duties besides patrolling the streets for drunken drivers, it is our responsibility to patrol ourselves. According to Sgt. Baron, only one out of every 100 intoxicated drivers is arrested. Because students are aware of this fact, they often drive drunk without thinking about the most important consequence of drunk driving — the possibility of killing an innocent person.

People should value life above all other things. It is important for students to realize that once a life is taken no one can ever correct what has happened.

If a student fails a class, she can retake the course. If a person bounces a check, he can pay an insufficient funds fee. But when a driver accidentally kills someone, that person is gone forever.

So when students decide to go out drinking, they need to consider all of the risks. People cannot just think about their blood alcohol level or if they will get pulled over by the police — they must also consider the safety of others.

The thought of getting a DWI may be terrible, but it is nothing compared with the image of having to attend the funeral of a drunken-driving victim.

Editorial Roundup

(AP) — The following is a sampling of editorial opinion from Texas newspapers:

*Fort Worth Star-Telegram on good budget news:*  
 You know it must be an election year when there's a tussle about who gets to announce — and take credit for — ordinary news about government finances.

In this case, however, there is good news. The Treasury Department apparently will soon announce that the budget deficit for fiscal 1996, which recently ended, will be about \$109 billion. That means the federal government spent \$109 billion more than it took in, which is good news because (1) as recently as August a \$116 billion deficit was predicted; (2) the deficit will have dropped for the fourth year in a row; (3) this is the lowest deficit since 1981; and (4) at 1.5 percent of the gross domestic product, the deficit equals the smallest percentage of the GDP since 1974.

The House and Senate Budget Committee chairmen, Rep. John Kasich, R-Ohio, and Sen. Pete Domenici, R-N.M., say it proves that Congress can control spending. At the same time, a spokesman for the Office of Management and Budget says it shows the impact of President Clinton's 1993 economic program.

They are both right. But they also should credit the 1990 budget package compromise between President Bush and a Congress with Democratic majorities. That set "pay-as-you-go" limits making it much more difficult to increase spending. The 1990 package never got the respect it deserved because Bush agreed to higher taxes, breaking an unwelcome campaign pledge. But it has been the basis for declining deficits beginning in fiscal 1993.

Meanwhile, both the White House and Congress surely realize that there isn't much time for patting themselves on the back. Deficits will start rising again in 1997, which means that even tougher budget choices are ahead.

*Amarillo Daily News on President Clinton's war on drugs:*

Presidential leadership, in its simplest form, occurs when the chief executive stands ready to take the heat all by himself.

On that score, it was disappointing the other night to listen to President Clinton stand in a crowd of millions of Americans in taking responsibility for the increase in drug use among teenagers.

During the first debate between Clinton and Bob Dole, moderator Jim Lehrer, a PBS newscaster, asked the president whether he deserves the blame for the 100 percent increase in teen-age drug use during the past four years. "I think every American in any position of responsibility should be concerned about what's happened. I am," he said.

OK, fine.

What the president's answer seems to dismiss, though, is the role of a moral leadership that only a president can provide. A president who is concerned about an issue, such as drug use, can use his office as the bully pulpit from which leadership flows. Indeed, the president's performance so far on the drug front has sent exactly the opposite message.

Clinton eviscerated the Office of National Drug Control Policy staff by more than 80 percent when he took office. He tried to eliminate more than 620 drug enforcement positions. He hired scores of known former drug users to the White House staff. And he did all this after joking on MTV during the 1992 campaign that if given the chance once again to smoke a little pot then he would have inhaled.

Taken together, all these acts send a terrible message to the nation's youth.

The president's performance in waging the war against illicit drug use has drawn rebuke from key members of his own party, notably Rep. Charlie Rangel of New York, who says that Clinton has abdicated his responsibility in protecting the nation's youth against the scourge of drugs.

While it is true enough that the average American child doesn't think much about the president's leadership before lighting up his or her first joint, it also is true that a head of state can exert tremendous moral leadership on just about any issue under the sun.

President Clinton has fallen short in waging the war on drugs. He should own up to his shortcomings. Such a demonstration of atonement also is the mark of a leader.



MAIL CALL

**Minorities do not require handouts**  
*Regarding Aja Henderson's Oct. 1 column, "Lack of minority scholarships keeps minorities away":*  
 To say that because half of the minorities accepted at Texas A&M do not enroll, we should give them money so they will is ridiculous.

Looking back on my senior year when scholarships were being awarded, I can remember about 90

percent of the scholarships mentioned in the daily announcements were specifically for minorities. And the last time I checked, any minority or female could apply for any of the scholarships available to the white male. If a minority or anyone for that matter decides to attend another school because Texas A&M did not write them a check, then more power to them.

Henderson mentions that minorities do not have the "family

legacy to uphold" because, historically, minorities were not allowed into the University. However, this is true for most major universities. Henderson also attacks the "ultra-conservative atmosphere" and blames this for the lack of minority enrollment. It is the same environment that attracts most of the students who enroll here.

Stacey Stagg  
 Class of '98

Choice not related to sexual preference

*Regarding recent articles and Mail Call letters regarding Coming Out Week:*  
 Homosexuality or bisexuality is not a conscious decision despite anything you may have

heard to the contrary.

I would ask that the heterosexuals reading this clear your minds for a moment and consider this — when exactly did you "decide" to become heterosexual?

Most of you will find that it was never a choice, you simply are. It is no different for us in that respect. How people react to homosexuals, however, is a different matter entirely.

Which brings us to the question — what do homo- or bisexuals want, anyway? We want what everyone else already has and takes for granted.

Should a heterosexual man mention that he went out to see a movie over the weekend with his date, the response would most likely be a bored, "Oh, that's nice." However, were a lesbian to mention the exact same thing, she would likely be met with, "Why

did she have to mention that?"

It must be understood that we don't have "lifestyles" any more than there is a heterosexual "lifestyle."

We do, however, have lives, and would like to live them with the same freedom to openly express ourselves as heterosexuals currently have. Is it really so much to ask?

Homo- and bisexual people have contributed in innumerable ways to our society, and will continue to do so.

Our country has shown a remarkable willingness to accept our time, efforts and even our lives in its service, both civilian and military.

The time has come when it must accept us as well. Seeing the responses from the last week or so, it is apparent that we are beginning to move in the

right direction.

Ken Burchett  
 Graduate Student  
 GLBA Vice President

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.