

# ABSOLUTE IMAGE PROBLEM

*There are many traditions at Texas A&M, and drinking heavily may be one of them. Statistics leave the supposed image of a drunken Aggie in question.*

By KIMBER HUFF AND JOHN LEBAS  
 THE BATTALION

Many colleges have a reputation for heavy alcohol consumption, but Texas A&M seems to top the list.

Rumors about drinking at A&M circulate: Harvey Road has the most DWI arrests for that stretch of road in the county, possibly the state; Hurricane Harry's is one of the top 90 alcohol sellers in Texas; more alcohol is consumed per square foot at the Dixie Chicken than at any other place in the country.

Many people accept the rumors as fact, even if they may not be.

But does A&M deserve its image? Do students here really drink more than those at other universities?

Surveys and statistics on student drinking at A&M indicate yes.

Designate a Bus Transit, designed to decrease drunken driving in Bryan and College Station, was hailed at its start earlier this semester as an innovative step toward solving this problem.

This alternative to driving while drunk would seemingly appeal to droves of party-going Aggies, but it has not. Students have not stopped drinking and driving.

A 1994 survey by the Harvard School of Public Health, which compared drinking statistics for 46 public colleges with more than 10,000 students, indicated that Aggies may drink and drive drunk more than other students.

Almost 42 percent of Aggies drive after drinking, compared with 30 percent of students at other large public colleges.

The survey found that almost twice as many Aggies also drive after having more than five drinks.

Designating a driver is also less popular at A&M — almost 30 percent of Aggies have ridden with a driver they knew was drunk or high. Twenty-two percent of other students do the same.

One rumor that would seem to support these findings is that Harvey Road has the highest DWI rate in Texas. But Lt. Scott McCollum, commander of information services for the College Station Police Department, said he doesn't believe this rumor is true.

"I've heard the rumor, but I've not seen any hard facts or statistics that would support it," McCollum said. "When you compare it to cities like Houston, Dallas, Austin and the like, if it turned out to be true I'd find it highly unusual."

McCollum said DWI rates in those cities would probably be higher because they have more people and bars.

"I know that places in Dallas and Houston have areas with more bars than Harvey Road," he said.

But Matthew Kenyon, executive director of DAB, said he believes at least one in six Bryan-College Station drivers are drunk at night. One in three, he said, have had something to sip on.

Although Kenyon does not know of any statistics to back up these figures, he said he believes there is some truth in them.

"I challenge everyone to go out at about 1

a.m., Thursday through Sunday," Kenyon said. "Almost every fourth car you'll see swerving."

Kenyon said drinking and driving is a bigger problem at A&M than at most other colleges.

"I think that every school is a party school," Kenyon said, "but I think the driving after drinking is much larger here."

The Harvard survey also indicates that Aggies appear to drink more often than their peers. Although the survey shows about 40 percent of all students at large colleges drink to get drunk, A&M students tend to binge more often than average. About 25 percent of Aggies are likely to have gotten drunk at least three times in the past two weeks, 1 percent higher than students at other schools.

Even when not getting drunk, Aggies beat other schools in drinking. Twenty-three percent of A&M students probably drank at least 10 times in the past month, compared with 20 percent of students at other colleges.

This drinking can result in negative consequences. More than 35 percent of Aggies drank so much they forgot where they were and what they did, compared to 27 percent at other colleges. Almost 30 percent of Aggies said drinking caused them to engage in unplanned sex. Nationwide, the average was 20 percent.

Of those who had sex, over 13 percent did not use protection because they were drunk. Nearly one out of four Aggies said drinking caused them to get behind in school work, and more than 6 percent said drinking caused them to get into trouble with local or campus police.

But the consequences of drinking reach past the Aggies who choose to get drunk.

Almost 60 percent of Aggies questioned said they had to "babysit" a drunken student. Half of the students at other colleges had to take care of drunken friends. And while the rate of unwanted sexual advances due to drunkenness is about the same — one-fourth of students here and at other colleges — less than 1 percent of Aggie women reported being sexually assaulted or raped because of alcohol. Almost 2 percent of women at other colleges said they had been victims of sexual assault.

Sherry Hostetter, assistant director of the Brazos County Rape Crisis Center, said she believes most date rapes involving alcohol are not reported. She said the Rape Crisis Center sees alcohol involved in such cases "more often than not."

"We see alcohol involved in about 90 percent of date and acquaintance rapes here," Hostetter said.

She said according to the Uniform Crime Reports Division of the U.S. Department of Justice, about 75 percent of date and acquaintance rapes in the nation involve alcohol.

Beyond the problems that alcohol causes, the question remains: Are Aggies a bunch of drunks? Not according to them. Of those surveyed, 0.0 percent admitted to being a problem drinker. However, almost 16 percent said they had had a drinking problem at some time.

*\*All statistics in this story come from the 1994 Harvard School of Public Health survey.*

## ENTERTAINMENT BRIEFS

### Cosby straddles horse to Garden

NEW YORK (AP) — If it takes practice to get to Carnegie Hall, how do you get to Madison Square Garden?

Horseback, if you're Bill Cosby.

Cosby was in perfect form as he entered the arena at the National Horse Show for a salute to retiring racing great Cigar.



Cosby

With a dour, immobile expression and his hands at his sides, Cosby bobbed along Saturday as he was led into the ring aboard his straight man — a very patient horse. He managed a couple of brief waves to the crowd before the horse ambled to a stop.

With the crowd egging him on, Cosby slowly leaned forward and painstakingly raised his leg over the horse's back to dismount.

"That was the longest moment of my life," Cosby said when he finally reached the ground.

Then, like a trouper, he introduced his co-star: "My horse — Jello Pudding."

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### Seinfeld co-star finds key to humor

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Jerry Stiller doesn't need skills — just a bell, sit back and wait for his comedic genius to emerge.

Stiller, who plays the hot-tempered, bellowing Frank Costanza on NBC's *Seinfeld*, says he never knows what to expect from the show's writers.

"I felt like Pavlov's dog every time I get a call from them," the 69-year-old actor said.

"I find out another part of the character five minutes before I go on the set" — idiosyncrasies like Costanza's foot odor, obsession with TV Guide and ability to speak fluent Korean.

Before the hit series, Stiller sold hot dogs in New York City and made 36 appearances on *The Ed Sullivan Show* with his wife, comedian Anne Meara. He also acted on Broadway.

"I never learned anything else, any skills, like typing," he said. "I thought it was below me. It was my stupidity, or call it my doggedness, that I learned one skill and little things broke here and there."

### Bateman blames bulimia on fame

NEW YORK (AP) — Justine Bateman says teen-age fame made her become a bulimic.

The former *Family Ties* star said she made a lot of rules for herself.

"I can have one more cookie if I go throw it all up later. Or I can have this now if I skip lunch later," she said in the Nov. 9 edition of TV Guide. "I'm talking mainly about doing stuff like not eating when I'm hungry. Or eating more than I really want to and then trying to get rid of it."

Bateman said she was sure people knew. "In fact, when they'd say, 'You look anorexic,' I'd take it as a compliment."

The 30-year-old actress, now starring on NBC's *Men Behaving Badly*, said she hit bottom three years ago and sought help in a 12-step program.

"One day the light went on, you know?" she said.

### Soap star runs for another Emmy

NEW YORK (AP) — Forget about pulling a Candice Bergen and bowing out of the next Daytime Emmy race — Erika Slezak says if nominated, she WILL run.

"I think Candy was wrong," the five-time Emmy-winning soap star said in Sunday's Parade magazine. "That's not the way this country is run. If you have one Pulitzer Prize, you deserve to try to achieve another. The way we recognize good work is giving out awards."

Slezak has won the best actress award for ABC's *One Life to Live* and has consistently beat out 16-time nominee Susan Lucci.

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