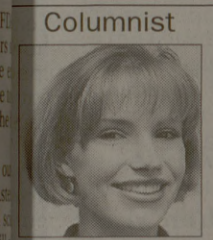


Capitalist Christmas Thanksgiving lost in Christmas hubbub

Going the Extra Mile" and "Always Something New Under the Tree" — these are two of Post Oak Mall's newest mottos.



Erin Fitzgerald
 Senior English and political science major

Although it is questionable whether Post Oak has gone the extra mile for customers, it has definitely gone the extra mile for Christmas.

The elaborate decorations and extravagant events at Post Oak Mall present society's increasing over-commercialization of Christmas. This year, the premature arrival of the holiday season has aborted Thanksgiving from the minds of Americans.

While visions of candy corn danced in kid's heads, anxious shoppers could begin buying extravagant Christmas memorabilia as early as Oct. 15 with the opening of the store Christmas Fantasies. Nov. 4 officially kicked off Post Oak's "holiday season" campaign. In small terms, "holiday" obviously refers to Christmas. Stores removed their orange and black window displays, replacing them with red and green. Vendors in islands and booths hung holly and wreaths. Post Oak management dangled streamers of twinkling white lights from the ceiling and Bing Crosby sounded from over the intercom.

But wait — what about Thanksgiving? Cornucopias and Pilgrims? Orange, brown, and yellow? It's been drowned out with egg nog and hot cocoa. Consumers can't see the turkey for the fat man. And forget Jesus. Oh, wait — that's already ancient history.

Instead, manufacturers and advertisers follow the Dutch folk tale of Old Saint Nick bringing monetary or trivial gifts and promoting materialism.

The Terrible Twos, by Ishmael Reed, satirically tells of a United States where Christmas season lasts all year and the country is run by former mall and department store executives. It looks like Reed is on his way to becoming the next prophet.



What was once known as the Twelve Days of Christmas is becoming the Twelve Months. Heck — the holiday's already got November under its shiny patent leather belt. Again, Post Oak Mall serves as a prime example. The five main events of the "Always Something New Under the Tree" campaign will begin before chefs even plan Thanksgiving dinner. This week, people can witness Santa's Holiday Parade, with the A&M Consolidated High School Marching Band blasting through the mall corridors followed by a group of children pulling decorated wagons. Afterward, the wagons will be judged — ah, the good ol' competitive spirit of Christmas. Perhaps Post Oak Mall should change its

motto to "Bring in the Clowns" because they have made a circus of this year's holiday season. However, they are not completely to blame. Economics, my dear Watson. Expected Christmas bonuses are burning holes in American consumers' pockets. So as everyone closes The Battalion, remembering it's time to make out that annual wish list, make another list: a thankful list. November is a time for Americans to reflect on blessings, not celebrate capitalism. People should postpone purchasing their merry merchandise. Otherwise, American materialism will let Santa become the Grinch that stole Thanksgiving. And I don't want a holly, jolly Thanksgiving. Bah, humbug.

Wedding brings change

When my best friend since third grade told me she was getting married in December, my initial reaction was, "Um, objection. Is that legal at our age? We can barely vote."



April Towery
 Sophomore journalism major

We had played with Barbies together, formed our own babysitters club, lip synced "Rockin' Robin" for our parents, double dated to prom, graduated high school together, and just last year moved into the dorm for our first college experience.

Allowing her to get married without me would be a terrible mistake — we do everything together, no exceptions. There is only one advantage to getting married at nineteen. Making the big decisions for the wedding doesn't take very long. Because the bride is underage, she decided that serving alcohol at the reception was probably not a good idea.

Other than that, getting married that young can only cause problems such as where to live, how to make money and the classic whether or not to stay in school. For my roommate and her fiancé, this will not be a problem. I think she's sporting something like a 4.2, and the graders used his graduate school exam as the answer key.

The problems for the maid of honor begin with gift ideas — I had a hard time shopping for woks and teapots.

The first shower I attended for her was the old-fashioned Pier 1/Target/Dillard's style shower. I let my mother purchase a lovely silver bread basket for my roommate, all the while thinking I've never even seen her eat off a plate. What would she do with a bread basket?

Don't get me wrong, I enjoyed the shower. We laughed, we talked, took a few pictures.

The only problem was that a few people had to leave early so they could study for their SAT the next day.

Another problem I had to suffer

through was shopping for a dress. This meant I had to try on a dress. I've been clothes shopping with my best friend since Benetton was cool, and it is not fun.

First of all, she's practically a size 6X, so while she shops in the children's section, I look for the blue dot that means hip/thigh minimization.

Secondly, she wants everything to be perfect. Perfection is a problem because it means I have to do something with my hair.

I know my roommate is secretly wondering if I will ever do my roots and try to pull off the "I'm an alternative red head" look, or just go back to my natural color, Toasted Dirt (Nice and Easy No. 108).

Another thing that has to be perfect is the music. If it were up to me, I would try to pull a few strings and get a live band. What my roommate had in mind was something more along the lines of stuff with no words.

As the wedding date nears, however, music is the least of my concerns. At the top of the list of reasons why you don't get married as a teen-ager is the whole selfishness issue.

Hello, I need a roommate. My original suggestion was to just have the married couple take up residence in Krueger Hall so I wouldn't have to change rooms — the only logical thing to do.

My roommate was quick to find a replacement roommate once she heard my suggestion.

Although I have a wonderful, single roommate now, the truth is that no one can take my first roommate's place, so I will just have to

learn to deal with it, invest in some waterproof mascara and show support for my friend.

It might even be good for me. Maybe she'll even let me propose a toast over champagne at the wedding.

I'll be sure and bring an ID.

At the top of the list of reasons why you don't get married as a teen-ager is the whole selfishness issue.

University perpetuates tradition of double standards to organizations

Whether five weeks old or 200 years old, every organization embraces tradition as the single most important factor in the foundation of its character.

It's a shame that students are willing to point out A&M traditions that are important to the character of the University and in the same breath destroy other organizations equally rich in tradition. Students can be so narrow-sighted as to believe only the University in and of itself is allowed to have tradition.

Traditions are important, especially at A&M, but they obviously must be modified in order to survive. The most important part of tradition is intent. Whether it is to represent desire, to educate or to promote camaraderie, intent is the only part of tradition that should never be sacrificed.

Tradition is a part of many organizations that evolved outside of the Aggie realm. Political, religious and fraternal organizations have affiliated with Texas A&M to broaden the scope of the University, bringing their traditions with them. These traditions, in some cases older than the University itself, are seldom recognized and welcomed as extensions of established University traditions.

Some Aggies are quick to overlook the fact that traditions such as ring dunking have only been established for a decade or so, yet they are accepted as historic traditions.

Hypocritically, University organizations have found a defense to accusations of misconduct and hazing in the form of tradition.

Groding at Bonfire cut, 'whipping out' by the corps and the kidnapping of the student body president are all traditions at A&M.

Closer examination of these questionable traditions reveals that each falls within the bounds of the state's definition of hazing.

Other organizations, including social and business fraternities, have been convicted for incidences very similar to these traditions.

Harmlessly forcing people to eat ice cream without their hands, as was the case for one business organization, is justification for sanctions, whereas hazing someone in a muddy field, a common Bonfire event, is not.



Sean McAllister
 Senior accounting and finance major

up, and cover the Student Body President in random substances, then leave him on the corner of a major intersection with only a sign covering the one stitch of clothing he is wearing. If the tradition plea doesn't work for others, it shouldn't work for the University.

On the flip side, long-time traditions, such as hazing in Greek organizations, have been largely phased out due to laws threatening an organization's existence. Modification is not an option for traditional bonding events designed to weed out weaker potential members because these events have already been

scrapped in an effort to avoid disaster. However, disaster may be inevitable if organizations based upon tradition are forced to dismantle the events that define the tradition itself.

Obviously, tradition at A&M doesn't include non-regs, fraternities, sororities or women for that matter. Adamant Ags find it their duty to make these factions feel out of place, since, accordingly, this is not their University. It wouldn't be farfetched to say that dogging any organization simply because of personal disapproval has become a tradition in itself.

Believe it or not, some A&M traditions, such as Midnight Yell Practice, can be constructively modified. The move from the horseshoe to the bleachers has actually done very little to change the long-standing tradition. Yell Practice continues to maintain its original intent and atmosphere despite its slight relocation.

Bonfire has also been modified. What originally began as a large pile of scrap wood has become its own science, constructed of uniform logs built to precise specifications.

Yet it retains its original intent as the symbol of A&M's burning desire to beat the hell outta t.u.

There is only one exception to the rule that traditions aren't made to be broken: A&M needs to alter its tradition of discord between students and campus organizations.

Every person has a right to his or her own opinion. Each person has particular favorites, and certain dislikes. But the excuse of "tradition" doesn't serve as justification for personal emotions.

Disaster may be inevitable if organizations based upon tradition are forced to dismantle the events that define the tradition itself.



MAIL CALL

Aggies don't help stranded student

Coming home from the Baylor game, my truck's clutch decided to quit working in Hearne.

Deciding to hitch a ride back to College Station, I was surprised to see all the cars with A&M stickers drive past. It took me almost 30 minutes until I was finally picked up, but not by Aggies.

Cadets are the keepers of tradition? Not when they pass a fellow Aggie in trouble. The 12th Man? As much as hurts me to say it, as far as I am concerned, it is dead.

Mark Breedlove
 Class of '98

A&M should look at out-of-state policy

Regarding Marika Cook's Oct. 8 story, "Residency policy not equal for all":

As Krista Johnson continues the struggle to win in-state tuition for military dependents, I would like to point out that twenty Air Force officers are currently earning graduate degrees at Texas A&M.

The Air Force pays in-state tuition for these students, although many, myself included, are not Texas residents.

Resident tuition status for military personnel and their dependents is determined by section 54.058 of the Texas Education Code, which appears in Appendix A of the Graduate Catalog.

It dictates that all military

members assigned to Texas and their dependents are eligible for in-state tuition at public institutions, regardless of their actual state residency, while dependents of military members assigned outside the state must convince the institution of their intent to become permanent Texas residents.

Since the Johnsons do not own property or have business interests in the state, A&M apparently is not convinced of the Johnsons' interests in the state or that Johnson is a bona fide Texan.

I have no intention of becoming a Texas resident and I receive in-state tuition.

Johnson, who legally is a Texan, must pay out-of-state tuition because A&M chooses to exploit this loophole.

Clearly new legislation is needed, and it is gratifying to see that Gov. Bush and Rep. Coleman are getting involved.

In the meantime, A&M would do well to reconsider its position and grant Johnson and others in the same circumstances in-state tuition.

Surely A&M — as proud as it is of its legacy of military service — does not plan to turn its back on the families of those who serve.

Robert Wacker, 2nd Lt, USAF
 Graduate student

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:

The Battalion - Mail Call
 013 Reed McDonald
 Texas A&M University
 College Station, TX
 77843-1111

Campus Mail: 1111
 Fax: (409) 845-2647
 E-mail: Batt@tamvm1.tamu.edu

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