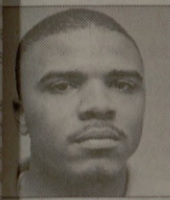


Quanell X will reveal conspiracy

When I say the words cocaine and crack, what is the first image that comes to your mind?

Is it the image of some thuggish inner-city crack addict bent over smoking his peace pipe, enjoying his free-based cocaine that rushes from his



Jeremy Valdez
Senior chemical engineering major

Columnist

I would have recognized him earlier if I hadn't been so hung over. But as I took my seat in the plane to return from the Thanksgiving break I was focused on my yogurt and Gatorade, an unlikely pair that works wonders the morning after a night of overindulgence.

It wasn't until the flight attendant started the safety features lecture that I realized I was sitting next to Jack Kevorkian, Dr. Death himself. I tried to start up a conversation.

"Good morning, Dr. Kevorkian. What are you doing so far away from Michigan?" I asked.

"Well, you know how things go. It's the holidays, and I have a little time to kill."

"Good one, Doctor K!" I laughed. "None of your sound bites do justice to your great sense of humor."

I was nervous; I wasn't expecting to conduct an interview. My scrambled brain worked to conjure up questions for the doctor.

"So what would you have done if you hadn't gone into medicine?" I asked.

"Well, I always thought it might have been fun to be a lawyer," he said.

"Really? I agree. I want to practice law. Anything except criminal — I couldn't stand defending guilty people," I said.

"Me neither," he said. "But for the good guys, I would make frequent use of the temporary insanity defense. That one can get anybody acquitted."

"Well then how come you've never pleaded that in any of your criminal trials, Doctor K?" I asked.

"Because I'm not temporarily insane," he replied.

I wondered to myself whether the most important word there

was "temporarily." I remembered some of the eccentric doctor's more embarrassing moments — like the time he insisted on wearing colonial garb and a powdered wig to his arraignment hearing. Or the time he killed Judith Curren, a woman who had stopped taking her prescribed anti-depression medication.

Kevorkian claimed that Curren suffered from chronic fatigue, immune dysfunction and a painful muscle disorder. Medical examiners, however, could find no evidence of any of these ailments. Authorities concluded that Curren suffered only from depression, obesity and possible spousal abuse. All of these are serious problems, yet they are all non-terminal.

These recollections made me a little more aggressive. I decided to tell the doctor what was really on my mind.

"Doctor, something that's always bothered me is your lack of a bedside manner. After all, you were a pathologist. You probably spent most of your career looking at dead or diseased tissue through a microscope. You help patients make life or death decisions, yet your medical work dealt overwhelmingly with only one side of that equation," I said.

"Maybe so, but I have worked with a few live patients. And after all, every doctor goes through essentially the same basic training. I think that makes most of us pretty qualified," he said.

"I'm not sure I agree. I don't support assisted suicide, but I think that if I did, I'd want someone a little more charismatic to be the standard-bearer," I said.

"A doctor's a doctor," he said, looking away with impatience.

"I know. But even though lots of people have told me to pull my

head out of my butt, I still wouldn't go to a proctologist for psychiatric help," I said.

"Well, at least I'm not motivated by financial concerns," he said. "I never charge people for helping them to commit suicide."

"Well, I think that's pretty fair. I know that if I were one of your patients and you were charging me for an assisted suicide, I'd be really tempted to write a bad check," I said. Then the doctor began to give his soapbox speech.

"I feel that it's the medical profession to break the long established taboo against euthanasia. Doctors who kill the dying are practicing what I call 'medicide.' Lots of people argue over 'the right to life,' but the right to choose death is something that ought to be constitutionally protected in this country," he said.

"Well, Dr. Kevorkian, I'd argue with you some more if I were in a better frame of mind," I said. "But I had a few beers last night and I've got a splitting headache. It's kinda hard to concentrate."

A little glimmer appeared in the doc's eyes and he flashed a toothy grin. "Are you sure it's not a brain tumor, or a



big fat embolism? Because I could help you out with that," I told him

thanks, but no thanks. All I needed was a spoon for my yogurt.

Edited for content Wal-Mart fights against creativity

Looking for that new death-metal LCD by your favorite group, "Vomiting Hemorrhage"? Well, you won't find it at Wal-Mart. But how about some Michael Bolton or Luther Vandross instead?

That's right, America's largest discount retailer, Wal-Mart, is censoring your entertainment. Still, it has been happening for some time, but several specific cases have gained media attention lately.

The title of the Nirvana song "Rape Me" was changed to "Waif Me." Cover art has been changed on CDs by artists ranging from White Zombie to The Black Crowes to John "not the Cougar anymore" Mellencamp. Countless CDs come with songs that have either been edited (311, Beck, Outkast, etc.) or dropped from the CD completely, which to my dismay has happened to Jackyl. Watch out Ratt and Warrent, you may be next.

In my own undercover investigation of the music department at the local Super Wal-Mart, I found stickers strategically affixed to the covers of all copies of various CDs, in one instance covering the connection between Siamese twins on Van Halen's "Balance," and in another



Mason Jackson
Senior marketing major

instance on Aerosmith's "Get A Grip" covering a cow nipple. Coincidence? I think not. More likely someone in the Wal-Mart hierarchy got excited at the site of a cow nipple and demanded it be covered lest someone assume he likes cows "in that way."

Artistic integrity is taking a major hit because the record labels are bowing to Wal-Mart, the single largest seller of pop music in the country. Do retailers have the legal right to do this? Sure, it's their store, and if censorship is the method they want to use to allocate shelf space, then it is their prerogative.

But it still isn't a good thing for us humans. Darth Vader, commander of the "Empire," was overheard saying, "I think what Wal-Mart is doing is great. It lowers public morale and makes the inhabitants of Earth more docile and ripe for invasion."

But the only reason retailers like Wal-Mart hold such influence over record companies is because of the amount of music they sell.

If more people realize that they may not be getting the real thing when they buy music at Wal-Mart then they might buy it somewhere else.

After all, no one says you have

to buy your music at the same place you buy your maple syrup, condoms and car wax (which are separate purchases unless you're a superfreak.)

Other stores also engage in this type of censorship. Blockbuster is one of them.

They refused to carry the unedited version of "Showgirls" and made the director cut out nearly a half hour of bad acting. Yet they inexplicably carried the full version of "Tango and Cash."

We must show these stores that we don't want them making these decisions for us. We can do this by voting with our pocketbooks.

In the end, Wal-Mart will listen to its bottom line, not to uptight wackos like the Christian Coalition. But I'm not advocating a boycott of Wal-Mart altogether.

The everyday prices are too low, and in the end you readers will listen to your bottom line, not to an all-knowing all-seeing columnist such as myself.

But please buy your music elsewhere. There are plenty of options, even for those in rural areas, where Wal-Mart is the only major store. There are always music clubs and, with the invention of cars and the construction of the national highway system, civilization is never far away.

All you have to do is speak up — and in this world, money talks.

MSC fee increase deserves support

The University Center needs our help. Tomorrow, Student Government will hold a referendum on a proposed increase in the Student Center Complex Fee.

The Student Center Complex Fee funds the physical operation of the MSC, the Rudder Complex and the John J. Koldus Building.

These facilities, in turn, support our student activities program by providing space for offices, meeting and events, besides offering a convenient place to hang out. Most of us visit the University Center once a day, whether to eat, cash checks, study, visit the bookstore, check our mail or sleep.

When you really take the time to think about it, the University Center is the "living room" of Texas A&M.

Here's the bottom line. Right now, each student pays \$24 each semester for the Student Center Complex Fee.

That's far below other public universities in this state. The proposal under consideration in the referendum would increase that amount by six dollars over a three-year period.

In other words, the fee would be increased by \$2 in Fall 1997, \$2 in Fall 1998, and \$2 in Fall 1999. This would bring the total amount of the fee to \$30 per student per semester by 2000.

Please understand that this fee is per semester, NOT per credit hour. If this proposal passes, then three years from now we would each be paying \$30 a semester for the University Center, which is still less than other public universities in Texas.

So, now that you understand why we have this fee, let me explain why we're being asked to vote on this proposal. By law, any increase in this fee must be approved by student vote. That's because it's a student center, and it's only right that the students should control the funding.

However, this fee has not been increased since 1992. Since then, the cost of operating the University Center has increased substantially, mostly due to in-



Chris Williams
Senior speech communications major

flation and repeated increases in the minimum wage. The University Center staff has made every effort to offset these rising costs by increasing revenue from sources other than student fees, but after nearly five years, they're running out of options. In addition to the normal operating costs of the University Center,

a number of renovations need to be made, and the money just isn't there to fund them.

Obviously, if we choose not to support the referendum, the University Center must either increase its revenue from users of the facility or reduce its expenses by cutting services. This would most likely create some difficult situations. Up to this point, the University Center has avoided using student groups as a source of income, but if the referendum does not pass, they may have little choice.

If student groups are charged for their use of the University Center, we may be saying goodbye to some of our most traditional programs, most notable those of MSC OPAS, MSC Town Hall, or even Class Council events such as Ring Dance.

These programs typically have very small profit margins, and usage charges could make them financially impossible. Some student groups might not even be able to meet in the University Center if they are charged for usage. When our University Center ceases to be accessible to all student groups, it ceases to be a true student center.

I hope that each one of you reading this will take the time to study the issues involved with this referendum and make an educated decision.

I hope that sometime before you vote, you'll take the time to visit the University Center and reflect upon what it means to you. I know I will. I have no great love for fee increases ... but I will support this one. I hope you will too.

Chris Williams is the Memorial Student Center president



MAIL CALL

A&M senators don't represent students

I'd like to express my frustration with the Student Senate. In the very election in which students elected these representatives, over 60 percent of the students voted in favor of the yell leader referendum. Yet, these same representatives voted to

table the bill. It is no wonder only 10,000 students vote in student elections when this is the kind of representation they have to look forward to.

I'd like to encourage students to encourage students to think twice about re-electing senators who are more concerned with their own personal agendas than the voices of the very people that

put them in office.

Summer Belleperche
Class of '96

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.