

THE BATTALION OPINION

EDITORIAL

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Established in 1893

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THINKING BACK

The Battalion reflects on this semester's events at Texas A&M.

Before taking that giant leap into 1997, The Battalion editorials board would like to pause and pass judgment on some things it has seen. After all, passing judgment is much more fun than mere reflection.

Bonfire redpots (A-)

When Greg White died in a traffic accident returning from Bonfire site, all eyes cast a suspicious look toward Bonfire.

Charges of irresponsibility and calls for an end to Bonfire could have easily followed if it were not for the quick actions of the redpots, who immediately disallowed riding in the back of pick-up trucks to the cut site. Although they realized they could not control everyone's actions, they made sincere efforts to deal with the problem.

Dr. Ray Bowen (B-)

Bowen deserves credit for taking the lead in discussing the problems brought on by the Hopwood case. However, he deserves criticism for the seemingly slow action taken to deal with the problem.

No matter how much people may disagree with some of his actions, no one can deny the juggling act he must perform every day.

And he is willing to discuss the difficulties he faces, especially through e-mail. (He replies to every message he receives.) Although he is trying, one way to improve his grade would be to have more interaction with students.

Class of '97 Council (C+)

The council deserves credit for the way it handled the mistake with the uninclusive Elephant Walk T-shirts. Not too many seniors seem happy with any of the T-shirts or Elephant Walk. But the council can pull up its grade next semester with a good class gift and a well-organized Ring Dance.

The class gift provides the best opportunity because of the bad string of gifts left by recent senior classes. The Class Gift Committee is seeking input now, so members of the Class of '97 should help the council improve its image by offering suggestions that can truly benefit the University.

Corps of Cadets (A-)

This is not a misprint. The Battalion recognizes the strong leadership of Stephen Foster, Corps commander, and Cindi Ericson, deputy Corps commander, as the leading reason why the Corps seems to be on an upswing. Enrollment statistics do not tell the whole story, though.

A new commandant, Maj. Gen. M.T. "Ted" Hopgood, has brought some new ideas of leadership and respect to the Quad, and the members of the Corps have dealt with them maturely. And the upper-classmen especially deserve credit for their respectful protest against the "running on the Quad" restriction. The Corps also deserves its high grade for continuing to encourage cadets to get involved on campus beyond the Quad.

Faculty Senate (B)

While most faculties around the country are being dragged to the table kicking and screaming to discuss post-tenure review, the Faculty Senate has tried to deal with the situation with understanding.

Although opposition to what is viewed by many professors as the dismantling of tenure, the Senate has taken a tone of compromise. Several professors welcome students' input on this issue and should be commended for that. The faculty faces a tough road in its protection of tenure, but this Senate seems up to the task.

Football Team (F)

This was not a grade earned by virtue of a poor record, because the players' talent cannot be questioned. Rather, the team's worst record in more than a decade is another side-effect of the team's real failure. Bad attitudes and a lack of respect plagued this year's team, which seemed to lack inspiration, leadership and direction.

Players did not seem to respect the coaches, and fans questioned

every play called on the field, often making a good case. The season was nothing short of a disaster, but even more disturbing is the trend that has taken hold of the players.

It was not long ago that the Twelfth Man tradition meant something on this campus. The team and the fans were one cohesive unit, and not just on game days. But R.C. Slocum's team does not seem to be part of the University; it is merely a display to be admired by those at A&M. Three coaches have been asked to move on, but the most important coaching change still needs to be made — Slocum needs to step down for the Aggies to move forward. With a new direction, this team can earn the respect of its fans again.

Graduate Student Council (A)

John Alvis and the Graduate Student Council have effectively kept the spotlight on several key issues. The need for a child-care center that will be useful to students, faculty and staff and a safer Wellborn Road are two issues where the Council's persistence may pay off.

The MSC (B+)

As the gods of co-programming, the MSC has helped foster an environment of interaction and mutual understanding on A&M's campus, which has more student organizations than any other university.

The MSC Council, which sits atop a complicated web of committees and programming, actively seeks input from outside groups on how to improve its service to students and become more efficient.

The MSC produces a million little opportunities, many of which go unnoticed. But in regard to services and leadership opportunities for students, the MSC continues to lead the way.

Student Senate (D-)

The most recent embarrassment came last week as the Senate approved a motion to ignore student input in the run-off elections referendum.

A lesser known embarrassment that speaks volumes for the Senate came earlier this semester as it struggled to create and pass an efficiency bill. A resolution with the word "efficiency" in its title was adopted, but few changes were made to help things run smoothly.

The Senate should be a voice the administration will hear. The politics and procedures with which the senators busy themselves should give way to this simple task. In the meantime, is there any such thing as a No-Confidence Referendum?

Dr. J. Malon Southerland (A)

Armed with an arsenal of Chat-N-Chews and an open-door policy, Southerland makes time for students every day. As a resource, he is probably the most helpful person on campus. He may not know the answer to a student's question, but he can find someone who does, and he makes this promise to every group of students he meets.

Student Body Presidents (B)

Toby Boenig and Carl Baggett have represented the students and the University well. As an outsider to Student Government, Baggett has surprised students with an inclusive style of leadership. As president, he has brought groups together for discussion and programming that may have never cooperated in the past.

The Student Body Executive Council, which is a collection of student leaders that deals with campus problems, may be his legacy, but he is far from finished; and students are anxious to see how well he represents A&M next semester when the Legislature is in session.

Yell Leaders (D)

Anything is better than last year, but by stubbornly trying to protect the Corps bloc and fighting run-offs, Head Yell Leader Chris Torn is taking the yell leaders in the wrong direction. Making fun of homosexuals in grody stories doesn't help either. As a group, the yell leaders are close to losing the respect of the student body.

Christmas wishes deserve equal rights

With the holidays coming up, we all need some sort of list of the things we want for Christmas. Back in elementary school, we used to make out our lists and send them to what's-his-name, the big guy "up there."

Columnist



Shannon Halbrook
Junior English major

Now, of course, we've grown up and we know to send them to someone more reliable, who's a little more in charge — Santa Claus.

Now, as an end-of-year column extravaganza, I've thought up some recommendations. And I hope it gives everybody ideas for what they could request under the tree this year. I've also included the retail prices of everything just to make shopping easier.

Finally, in an effort to make the things on the list seem more equal, I made each one No. 1 on the list. That way, it places no particular importance on any single item. It's a kind of Hopwood compliance for Christmas list items. So here it is:

1. The first thing on any innocent's Christmas list always has to be world peace (Retail price: five bucks and a Laffy Taffy wrapper). Of course, it didn't come with the end of the Cold War, so why should we expect it now?

1. Just in case that world peace thing doesn't work out, we should hope for some sort of holiday spirit between us and the folks at t.u. (Retail price: the cost of all those logs we burned in Bonfire. And generations of Arab-Israeliesque bad blood between our two peoples.)

1. R.C. Slocum's humble resignation (Retail price: what's his salary?). Of course, it didn't come with the end of the Cold War, so why should we expect it now?

1. The beginning of another O.J. Simpson trial to give the American people a chance to prove they don't care anymore (Retail price: \$30 for gloves and billions in advertising).

1. A red lightsaber (Retail price: overpriced, but not enough that they won't sell millions to nostalgia trippers like myself).

1. Speedy installation of smoke detectors in airplane cargo holds, which are now blessedly required by U.S. law and will now make air-

planes — big pieces of metal that float through the air — perfectly safe (Retail price: the cost of a time machine to go back to a time when people, including me, still marginally respected their government).

1. Everything sappy and personal I can think of (Retail price: a month's worth of my salary at The Batt, a deliciously underrated chunk of money I'll really miss).

1. Finally, it'd be nice if opinion columnists just shut up for once and let people make their own opinions — and sure as heck not tell anybody what they should want for Christmas (Retail price: a pack of cigarettes).



Muslims wrongly face jail for ignorance of laws

Two Iraqi refugees are quickly learning that the new-law game isn't all it is cracked up to be, especially if it's played in the United States when their wives are 13 and 14 years old.

Majed Al-Timiny, 28, and Latif Al-Hussani, 34, were married in Lincoln, Neb., on Nov. 9 to a pair of sisters who were 13 and 14 years old. It was a traditional wedding ceremony performed by a Muslim cleric and, following the ceremony, each couple went to separate houses to consummate their marriages.

Today, however, both Al-Timiny and Al-Hussani are not preparing for a blissful honeymoon in the Caribbean. Instead, they stand accused of statutory rape, facing up to 50 years in

Columnist



Jenni Howard
Senior international studies and economics major

prison for their crimes. The idea of a 13-year-old being forced to marry someone against her will is unheard of in our country. But in the context of the Iraqi culture, this is quite normal. And according to close friends of the parties involved, the two girls expressed excitement and anticipation typical of brides-to-be the day before the wedding. The prosecutors and the public should take these facts into account before judging the men according to standards they've never been acquainted with.

But many say it is the responsibility of the immigrants to acquaint themselves with the laws of the United States. If there were only 25 laws in the United States to know, this would be a fair argu-

ment, but this isn't the case.

To ask immigrants to overcome their language and cultural barriers to educate themselves on laws in the United States may not seem to be too much of a request, but consider how hard it is for even our own voters to take the time to truly learn about what candidates stand for in elections. In a country where there are more rights than there is time to learn about them, it seems a little harsh to punish these two men so severely.

If it were an American citizen who had been raised in our culture and exposed to our legal system through education, ignorance of our laws would be an unacceptable excuse for committing a crime. But these two men had much less of an opportunity to become acquainted with the way things go in the Land of the Free.

If the United States plans on being this diligent in punishing

immigrants for violating laws, then it should consider the fact that the cost of keeping these men in jail for 50 years is much more than that of hiring someone to produce an orientation-type pamphlet that is specific to the culture from which an immigrant comes. Such a pamphlet could address the significant cultural differences between the immigrant's own country and the United States, including marital laws.

Although we cannot be expected to let every immigrant live according to the way things used to be, in this specific situation, 50 years in prison is too harsh of a method to teach newcomers this lesson. It would be better to just annul the marriage and greatly decrease the possible punishment for these two men than to take away 50 years of their lives for violating laws that they truly weren't aware of.

Internet eliminates America's work ethic

Want some information for a paper or maybe even some sports stories? Try the Internet. How about X-rated pictures? Well, you know. And while using Yahoo or WebCrawler, search for the topic "lazy," because that's what the Internet is making us all.

The Internet is one in a long line of effort-saving inventions that have eased everyday tasks and have largely shaped today's society. Beyond their practical applications, these inventions have also contributed to a philosophy that the less work it takes, the better it is. People have started to look for the effortless way out and have begun to lose sight of the real meaning of hard work.

Speaking of the easy way out, the thought of going to the library for research seems old-fashioned and really unnecessary when it is possible to look up anything and everything at a computer terminal and print it out.

Why fight the traffic and search endlessly for a parking spot when the computer is right in your room? Why venture through vast volumes of books and magazines hoping Joe Blow has not already swiped the issue you're looking for when people can access the same site at the same time on the Internet? Because college is about more than just information. It's about learning how much you can accomplish if you really work at it.

For people that think running up and down six floors is inconvenient and difficult, take a shot at life in the real world where life's trials and tribulations are tenfold.

Think that this is all farfetched?

Columnist



Sean McAllister
Senior accounting and finance major

Saying to yourself, "I'll never get that lazy"? Well, rethink this after a proven example — television.

If television hasn't had an effect on society, then where did the term "couch potato," a term synonymous with lazy, come from? And if television hasn't made people lazier, why do networks have to threaten

blackout home sporting events unless there is a sellout? Simple: If they didn't, people wouldn't bother going.

What if our children are so lazy that they will hate anything and everything that requires effort? Go research at the library? Hell, they might not even want to type because voice recognition programs may spell the end of something as easy as typing.

The innovations we consider convenient our children may consider cumbersome.

In an automated world, that thing called a work ethic will be redefined. Mornings will become a time for power switches instead of commuting. People who roll up their sleeves will only be doing so to keep themselves from hindering their operation of a mouse.

Computers may well trivialize what we call the sense of accomplishment. Will computers and whatever new technology that comes along do everything for us? At the present pace — yes — unless everyone takes time to think about what detrimental effect that might have on us. Sure, it's convenient to get on the computer and venture through cyberspace, but it progressively makes people what most despise — lazy, unmotivated and easily manipulated.

Prejudice perseveres

Hi. I'm Bryan X, and I hate you. I don't know you; don't need to. I hate you for what you've done to me (though you haven't done anything to me).

Sound familiar? These are the kinds of ideas espoused by such "leaders" as Louis Farrakhan and Quanell X. Men such as these spread their ignorance and irrational fears through broad-based accusations that have little or no relation to reality. Also, they hurt my feelings.

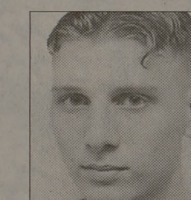
That's right; call me a sissy, but I really don't like hearing about how little I care about the black race, or how "my people" are just about ready to do away with them for good. I mean, I guess my copy of the top-secret White Man's Agenda must have gotten lost in the mail and arrived at some dissident's address. I hope the Great White Brotherhood doesn't hold me responsible.

Oh yeah ... I forgot. There is no plot against black people. The truth is, people are individuals and don't share a group consciousness.

Hmm ... the truth. Interesting concept. What exactly is the truth? The truth is, the only white groups that preach racial separatism and superiority are those such as the Klan and the Neo-Nazi movement, and they are unanimously condemned. They should be. But people like Farrakhan and Quanell X have turned the discrimination around and applied the old verse about "an eye for an eye."

Unfortunately, fighting fire with fire doesn't work, either literally or figuratively. We need love and understanding amongst all people, not long-standing grudges over color. Yes, some pretty terrible things have happened in this world and this country, and I'm sorry and ashamed

Columnist



Bryan Goodwin
Junior English major

that they ever took place, but if we are ever to move forward as a people — humans, I mean, not these artificial color-coded groups we cling to in such a cowardly manner — we have got to let the past rest.

I'm optimistic; I believe that racism is slowly being bred out of people over time. But unfortunately, some people are fighting to spread racism. Here's an all-purpose indicator: If you hear people railing against a racial group as a whole, dismiss everything they say. They have only their own interests at heart, not yours.

Furthermore, racism is born out of fear. Must and always shall be. Does anyone consider Adolf Hitler a brave person? He was a small, cowardly man who must have hated himself, because he praised attributes he did not himself possess. Racism comes out of a common need to feel superior, and thus occurs mainly in people with poor self-esteem, such as the uneducated.

To get beyond our own limitations, we must approach the idea of truly accepting people for who they are with open hearts and minds.

So what is the truth? Have I uncovered it here? Unfortunately, I'm afraid I know the truth all too well. The truth is, some person will come up to me today and ask me why the hell I was implying that blacks are his equals. On the other hand, the truth is also that today, somewhere on campus, some students will discuss "that horribly racist column in The Batt." Because we fear change. Because hate is easier than love, and far less dangerous. Still, I can hope and pray that the world is bigger than that. And I do.