

EDITORIAL

THE BATTALION

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CAIN HALL MUTINY
 Athletic Department ignores computer access rights of non-athlete residents

More than half the residents of Cain Hall have recently been reconvened. The hall's adjacent computer lab. The decision was made about a week ago when problems arose concerning individuals housed in Cain, utilizing the computer facility in non-productive manners.

Inappropriate conduct such as "surfing the net" for fun, constantly checking electronic mail and hanging out in the lab were just a few of the problems.

A measure has been taken, implementing a computer logon identification for athletes to use the facility's computers. Those athletes who choose to enter the facility, must present their student I.D. card. He is expected to be scanned. This will ensure the individuals are athletes.

The more than 50 percent of residents who are not athletes feel this decision is unfair and unnecessary. All room and board fees for the residents of Cain go toward Athletics Department funding, even if the resident is not an athlete.

Moreover, the computer lab is under strict control by the athletic department, and is in no way connecting to CIS.

Residents feel if they have to pay money to the Athletic Department,

they should have access to all Cain resources, especially a computer lab which is designed specifically for the hall.

Their complaint is that, between the hours of 7:30a.m. to 5:00p.m., most athletes are in class or training, leaving the computer lab barren, but useful to others if they were allowed to use the services.

Since not all Cain residents are not athletes, nothing was ever promised to the general public in using the predominantly athletic services.

This unspoken criteria has been viewed by most of the non-athletic residents as information which should have been supplied at the time of hall integration.

Further development in this situation is sure to come as residents continue to exercise their opinions about banning non-athletes from the lab.

For now, a sign has been posted on the computer lab window. It reads, "This computer lab is for Student Athletes Only!"

The Athletic Department took the NCAA seriously when that organization ordered that no dining/living facility could be strictly for athletes, but they failed to follow the spirit of the law and make Cain hall truly accessible to all students.

'Special' interest
 Handgun ban neglects rights of poor

Rayna Ross bought an inexpensive handgun. The cheap pistol was the only mode of defense she could afford. Three days later, it saved Ross' life when a stalker broke into her apartment and attempted to kill both her and her infant daughter. With crime on the rise here in the Bryan-College Station area, it may not be long before situations like this hit home.

But, if Sen. Barbara Boxer (Dem.-Calif.) has her way, Ross will lose her right to defend herself, and she and her baby will be vulnerable once more.

Boxer has sponsored the "American Handgun Standards Act of 1997," a bill which would ban what she refers to as "junk guns." It would require low-priced firearms to pass a "sporting purpose test."

The new law would effectively ban half of America's handguns and deny the disadvantaged their constitutional right to defend themselves. Senator Boxer said "junk guns" are not safe and are the favorite of criminals. Section 2, Sentence 7 of the bill reads, "Junk guns are used disproportionately in the commission of crimes," but a Heartland Institute Policy study shows "Saturday Night Specials" are used in only 1 to 3 percent of all violent crimes.

Gary Kleck and Marc Gertz, two noted criminologists, cited statistics proving guns are used 2.5 million times a year for self-defense purposes,

Columnist



Donny Ferguson
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es, and save 65 people for every life they claim. Kleck, a member of the American Civil Liberties Union, found women used firearms over 192,000 times to fend off sexual assailants in 1995. Not only is Boxer's gun ban a threat to the lives of law-abiding citizens, it is ineffective for fighting crime.

A Department of Justice study found 7

percent of criminals who owned a handgun bought it at a legitimate retailer. The Department of Justice also found that of 32,000 sexual assaults attempted, only 3 percent were successful against armed women, but 33 percent of unarmed women were raped.

Boxer's prohibition of inexpensive handguns disarms victims, giving murderers and rapists free reign to commit crimes against the poor. If what Boxer said about handguns is true, then one would expect Washington, D.C., with the most restrictive gun laws on the books, to be America's safest city.

In reality, the murder rate in Washington, D.C., is 78.5 homicides per 100,000 people.

This is the highest murder

rate in the nation. Arlington, VA., just across the Potomac River, has fewer handgun restrictions and a rate of 2.2 homicides per 100,000 people.

This is one of the nation's lowest rates.

Maybe this is why former Washington, D.C., Police Chief Maurice Turner said, "What has the gun control law (D.C.'s handgun ban) done to keep criminals from getting guns? Absolutely nothing. [Citizens] ought to have the opportunity to have a handgun."

This does not say much for the effectiveness of Sen. Boxer's proposed firearms ban. Boxer should stop assaulting the constitutional rights of unfortu-



nate individuals and consider that they are without the luxury of a senator's salary. Boxer is intent on disarming honest citizens, despite the fact those living in households making under \$7,500 a year are the most frequent victims of violent crime. America's lower class stands to lose more than a constitutional right. They stand to lose their lives.

On-campus students cross wires
 RHA forces cable on silent, non-viewing minority

An initiative to distribute cable television to all Texas A&M on-campus residents was spearheaded in 1994 by the Resident Housing Association under President Owen Ross.

After an overwhelmingly affirmative student vote in Spring 1995, Residence Life and Housing got the project underway. Looking back, RHA's distribution of cable to the on-campus students was a terrible mistake.

Such poor foresight is understandable. Everyone was mentally drooling over the hours of TNT movies, football games, and open heart surgery on the one educational channel that even students love.

In a delirium, they were children let loose on a candy store, gorging without considering what was unhealthy for them as students and human beings. They made the unfortunate choice therefore, to open Pandora's Box.

Majority rule should always be tempered by a consideration for the minority, but the minority in this case is getting the proverbial shaft.

Columnist



Joshua Hill
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First, everyone pays for the service, whether they want it or not. More importantly, few on-campus abstain when under such social pressure from room-mates and friends. Some give in to the box-time, and some are forced to trudge to the foreign desks of the library.

The physical ubiquity of the television drug is not the worst problem. As much as this society admires heroes for their refusal to compromise their principles, individuals flock like a herd of lemmings to the TV. People are subconsciously pressured to be normal, i.e., hooked up.

Contrary to popular belief, not everyone had been splicing in halls before public cable, and the cost of cable was a valuable deterrent to all but the most wealthy and needy addicts.

Also, A&M applied social pressure just by the installation. After all, if a world-class university and a trusted institution of society hands out something, the gift must be worthwhile, or at least harmless.

Then again, the Trojan Horse looked good too.

Many people falsely justify the necessity of cable by citing the need to keep up with the news and culture of the world.

In Dr. Christopher Alexander's political science class, students learn print is known as a "hot" medium and television is known as a "cool" medium. These labels indicate what process occurs in the brain under the influence of these media. Print requires and produces thought. It trains the brain in active, logical thought processes. In contrast, television communicates images, and encourages little thought. Practically speaking, a newspaper impacts deeper and sticks with an individual longer than news from CNN.

What kind of cultural future is being painted for the Aggies? Cable aspires to be as much of a cultural necessity as it is a cultural modifier, and A&M is giving in.

Humorists, authors, and anyone else who cares to be observant have constantly commented about the obvious incongruity between television and life.

Furthermore, commercial and crowd-pleasing tendencies of networks give them the flippant characteristics of a tabloid. No one cares for real art, beauty and accurate portrayals of life when the profits

can be found in cheap, weekly exploitations of the same.

The vision of this experiment in A&M halls must be seriously questioned as the product of television in society has already been shown to be apathy.

The time for leadership is the time of crisis. That time is now. The average American is overweight, uneducated (compared to other world powers), and apathetic. If A&M wants to be a cradle of leaders, it must quit jumping off the cliff with the rest of the U.S. culture.

The philanthropic, well-meaning business interest which installed the cable enticed association members and concerned students with dreams of cable becoming the next great educational gizmo. They dangled tutorial sessions and even classes from the remote control.

Current Resident Hall Association President Jesse Czelusta remains mildly optimistic. "I hope that the educational possibilities are fully explored and that the students don't get sucked into the old time-vortex," he said.

Such optimism is admirable, but education is the product of desire, discipline, and hard work — all three of which are cable television's arch-enemy. I just hope we are not yet over the cliff.

HOPE for Georgians, Texans get TTAGed

Since its inception, a primary goal of the Texas lottery has been to turn a natural human vice into financial support for higher education. Of course, the legislature has not acted upon this issue expeditiously. Maybe it has other plans for its "untapped" funds.

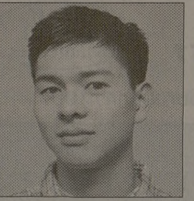
Before we start pointing fingers, however, there is Helping Outstanding Pupils. This unprecedented program, which is funded by the Georgia lottery, pays tuition and fees for residents attending either public or private universities in that state.

The scholarship also includes a book allowance and an opportunity for two major/field changes. To be eligible, Georgia high school students must attain an overall grade-point ratio of a "B" or better and maintain a cumulative grade-point ratio of 3.0 or better in college. While this sounds too good to be true, these standards are attainable, especially with money as motivation.

Georgia students seem to be taken care of — but what about Texas?

The Texas Lottery Commission reports the state lottery contributed at least \$1 billion to the Texas General Fund last year, all of which was veiled under a political cesspool. Some es-

Columnist



Travis Chow
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timate that Texas has at least \$5 billion in accumulative surplus sitting untouched (legally that is).

A resource most students do not know about exists. The Texas lottery surplus is TTAG (Texas Tuition Assistance Grant, pronounced "tea-tag"), a Texas program modeled after HOPE. The program has been in law since 1991, but until this year, TTAG has seen no funding.

This Texas program needs at least \$23 million to do one-fourth what HOPE accomplishes. This year, TTAG received \$98,000 in funding. Although this spare change represents an optimistic sign, TTAG has a long way to go toward providing tuition and fees to Texas students.

Georgia, on the other hand, seems to know how to build a solid infrastructure for its ever-growing economy. The Georgia Department of Education reports spending over \$1.1 billion of its lottery surplus on education. Now the question arises whether Texas will have a chance with its lottery surplus.

To break down the money banks, the total for the TTAG venture would be about \$2,000 annually at Texas A&M, going to 24,000 high school "B-or-better" students. Not only would TTAG pour the promised funds back to students, the program would generate enthusiasm toward learning. Just think, all of this would be possible if the Texas legislature would give

Georgia, on the other hand, seems to know how to build a solid infrastructure for its ever growing economy.

higher education a few crumbs from its \$5-billion cake.

To put this into perspective, if the lottery surplus were only \$50, the legislature would have to give away 25 cents for the future of Texas youth. So far, they have given less than a penny.

So if Texas pride runs deep in your veins, if you want to see some of that promised lottery fund, then go voice your opinion. Make a concerted effort to contact the state legislature, Texas A&M Student Government or even the Aggie Mom's Club. Students wonder how change comes about, but many never take action to ensure what they want is being considered. Who knows? If students care enough, the legislature may just flip a coin their way.



MAIL CALL

Student Senator clarifies Ogden plan

Thursday's paper contained an article describing the advantages of Rep. Ogden's plans for a fee simplification bill. The following is a list of issues concerning the bill the Student Senate would like to clarify.

False: "The cost of attending Texas A&M has steadily risen...Ogden has proposed a fee simplification plan to reverse this crippling trend."

Truth: Rep. Ogden stated himself that fees will not go down. This plan is just a different way of displaying the information, with the original intention of simplifying the process for the state legislature in comparing fees of public institutions for statistical purposes across the state.

False: "No longer would the average fee statement be filled with a myriad of complex, redundant fees. Instead, students would be given one tangible dollar amount to show how much the University is demanding for non-academic purposes."

Truth: There is nothing "complex" or "redundant" about the fee statement. As you know, each payment is described in a very obvious manner and amount. As for "tangible," which means being precisely realized, one lump sum, amount or either category will do nothing but that. One lump sum disguises where your money is going. What is more simple? An itemized fee statement or three lump sums.

False: "Students would be given the power to control the amount of the fee through a direct referendum...A referendum on increasing more fluid than the single fee rarely has a chance to be defeated."

Truth: Students already have that power.

In addition to these false statements, Junk had the confidence to make three statements that are flat out lies.

False: "What's baffling to me is why the Student Senate, presumably the 'voice' of the students would pass resolution designed to limit students from voting on their own fees."

Truth: We would do nothing of the kind. Junk is mistaken about the purpose behind Ogden's plan.

False: "The Ogden plan will soon

be introduced to the state legislature and debate will intensify."

Truth: Ogden has not even filed the bill and is currently running for the Texas State Senate.

False: "Passage of the Ogden plan would allow current and future Aggies to control their non-academic fees...By giving the students the power to control fee inflation, the opportunity to attend A&M can be extended to thousands of prospective Aggies."

Truth: The Ogden plan has nothing to do with controlling non-academic fees. Students already have powers to control fees. Furthermore, Legislative Relations, in conjunction with the Student Senate, in reality are trying to make higher education more accessible and available. Instead of jumping to conclusions, search for the truth. Look for the positive.

Possible Solution: Perhaps Ogden's fee simplification plan can be used. Instead of only showing three lump sums, perhaps the fee statement could be itemized so students will know where their money is going and then list a lump sum at the bottom of the statement. The underlying fact is that students want to know where their money is going.

The above misconceptions I hope have been clarified. Several hours of research have been put into Ogden's Fee Simplification plan both by the Student Senate and Legislative Relations.

Cass Burton
 Freshman Student Senator

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:

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