



Artwork by James Vineyard

**Sexual experimentation in college?
 Not these days — kids are starting
 younger, with more consequences**

By MICHAEL SCHAUB
 THE BATTALION

Young people are not just worrying about their math homework anymore. Jason Elms, a senior civil engineering major, has heard stories about the changing face of grade school life from his friend, a junior high school substitute teacher. "He told me he had to pick up a note from a kid in one of his classes that said she had to buy a home pregnancy test," Elms said. The growing social permissiveness of sexuality has made young people more curious about sex, he said. "When you're 12 or 13, your hormones are running like crazy," Elms said. "Hell, you turn on every talk show, there's an 11-year-old talking about having a kid. Nothing's shocking." Psychologist Betty Milburn, associate director of Student Counseling Services, said young people are forced to handle sexual issues early in life. "Kids are active at way too early an age, at 13 and 14," Milburn said. "You can't handle the emotional aspects at that early an age." Milburn said she partly attributes the growing trends in youth sexuality to media treatment of sexual issues. "There's so much of it out there, we kind of become desensitized, and it doesn't seem like such a big deal," she said. "There's lots of sexual stuff in all forms of the media." "We have all these beauty pageants for young preteen girls. Some people would say that's sexual exploitation." Kendall Madden, a junior agricultural development major, said she also believes people are becoming sexually active too early. "One of the causes is TV," Madden said. "Another is family up-

bringing. There's a loss of morals — people are straying away from the church." If the threats of sexually transmitted diseases and pregnancy have not deterred children from becoming sexually active, Milburn said it may have at least influenced some young people to remain monogamous. "There probably is a little less promiscuity nowadays," Milburn said, "but again, there seems to be plenty of one-night stands." The increasing divorce rate in the country has led some students to try to sustain problematic relationships, Milburn said. "I'm surprised by the number of students who are willing to stick with a relationship that's having problems," she said. "There are lots of factors there. Certainly STDs is one of them, and another is the divorce rate." Debra Grant, pastor of Peace Lutheran Church and a chaplain with the Campus Ministers Association, said definitions of sex and marriage change with time. "A higher percentage of students are products of broken relationships in their parents," Grant said. "No matter what the denomination is, the church has had to deal with open discussions as to what 'marriage' means." Despite increasing media coverage of AIDS and other STDs, not all young people take disease into consideration, Elms said.

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**In today's sex-dominated world,
 virginity is a blessing — and yields
 more benefits than preventing STDs**

Columnist



Aaron Meier
 Junior political
 science major

Ross from the sitcom *Friends* confessed he was a virgin when he got married. As I sit alone in my bed and watch these events unfold on television, I have to laugh. I do not tune in to *Baywatch* to see Pamela Anderson Lee develop morals (a new addition next season, along with a brain).

It's hard to think of something to say after telling someone you are a virgin. People react with raised eyebrows and the ever-present "Wow," or a shaking head and a look of bewilderment. I do not tell people I am a virgin. I just tell them I've never had sex before. The word "virgin" implies that I am next in line to be thrown in a volcano or something. It is not like I started my life trying to be a virgin, but here I am, sexless and 21. "Sexless and 21" — it sounds like a bad spin-off of *Beverly Hills 90210*. The media has decided recently that sex is "out" and chastity is "in." Gone are the days when watching television meant seeing more bare flesh than is at a nudist colony. These days, Oprah shouts about "second virginities."

I am not going to find a good role model on television. The same media that hypes Dennis Rodman and his cross-dressing escapades on ice cannot dictate morality. Friends ask why I have stayed a virgin for 21 years. The answer is, "I really don't know." I never made a conscious decision to not have sex. It just evolved from my life. Some people say religion is the reason they remain virgins. This does not apply to me. Too many people in the world beat their Bibles during the day, then hop in bed at night faster than porno stars. Some people say they do it because they are afraid of catching sexually transmitted diseases. Surprisingly, not enough people say yes to this. With diseases such as herpes and gonorrhea and AIDS rampant in society, sex has become one of the most dangerous things to do. People say, "This is Texas A&M, the most conservative school in America. STDs are not a problem here." To these people, I say you can wither away in a hospital, remembering your days at the most conservative school in America. Personally, I am not going to risk the rest of my life for a night of pleasure.

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