

# Heaven's Gate closes forever

*CBS, Dan Rather incorrectly blame World Wide Web for cult suicides*

The deaths of 39 members of the Heaven's Gate cult in southern California are easy to explain. They were a group of dissidents, outsiders on society, who became enthralled with the vision of a future paradise brought to them by UFOs. This vision, however incomprehensible for the rest of the world to understand, was none the less their vision, something they believed in and it caused them to kill themselves.

Columnist



Stephen Llano  
Senior  
history major

Morning News printed an article explaining the group's web design activities. The article explains how easy and profitable the field of web page design has become.

Instead of taking the logical view of The Dallas Morning News, CBS took this lucrative and easy form of employment and made it the reason for the bizarre mass suicide.

If members of Heaven's Gate were plumbers, would CBS attack the plumbing industry? What if they developed a tasty and refreshing soft drink? CBS would automatically assume that plumbing was a cult-like activity, and the developers of Coke and Pepsi are in league with aliens. Just because the Internet happened to be their source of employment doesn't prove a relationship exists between it and cults.

Of course, this shouldn't surprise anyone. The media love to probe and point fingers just to get attention. The type of report CBS aired is unacceptable, but typical. Because the producers of the *CBS Evening News* don't understand or

maybe feel excluded from the Internet, they assume it is a resource outside of mainstream society. This knee-jerk reaction to what people don't understand is natural, and it some-

times breeds fear. But it is no reason to assume a network of machines is responsible for the actions of disenfranchised cultists.

But in our society, fault is taboo.

On a day to day basis, people are told by television, radio and events around them that if they suffer from anything, be it a headache, or financial problems, there is someone else to blame.

With hour upon hour of TV watching, the viewer receives a simple, distinct message — "It's not your fault." Instead of blaming mindless devices, art or music for the bizarre actions of a few outsiders, society needs to start blaming individuals for their actions. Personal responsibility for one's actions has gone the way of the dinosaur. Our country will too, unless people start to take some individual responsibility.

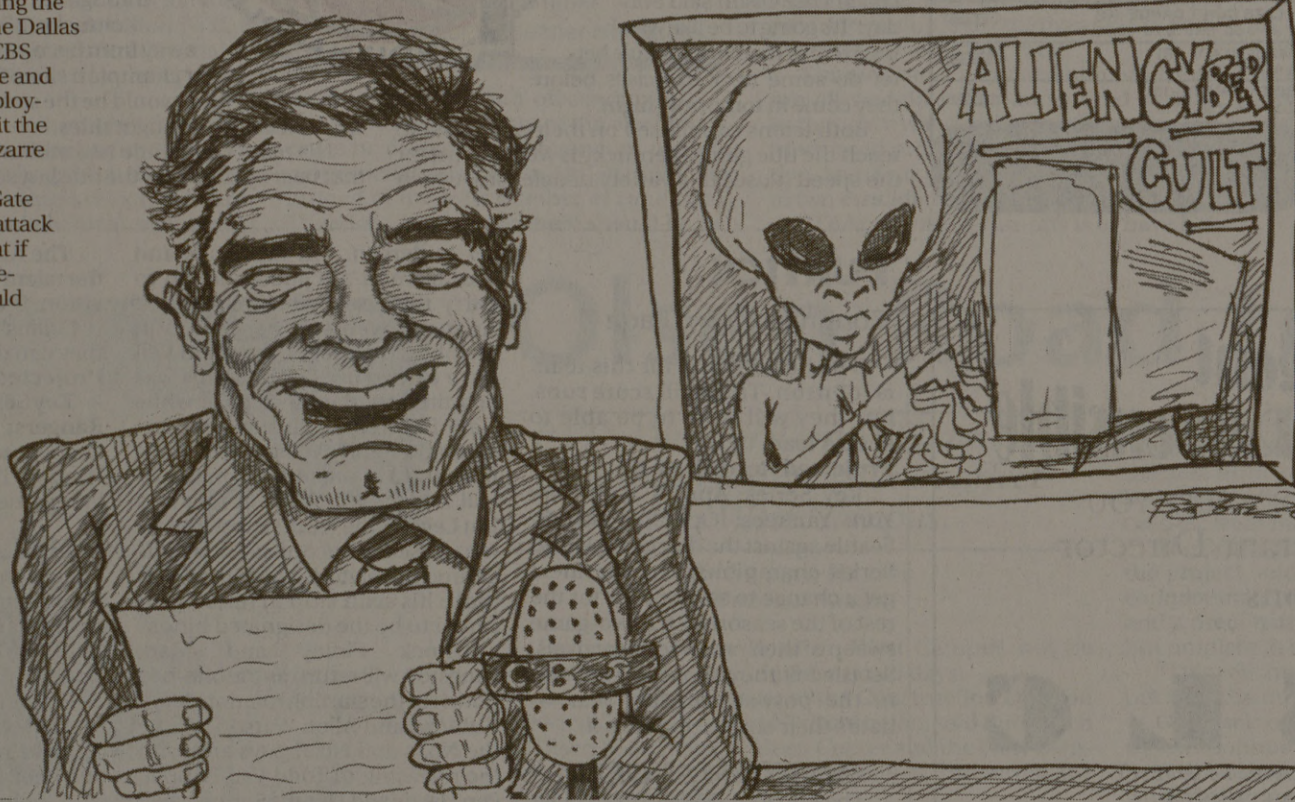
The death of 39 people is the issue at hand and not much of an issue considering they didn't do anything but kill themselves. They are the sole reason behind their own actions.

But when ignorant reporters from CBS blame the Internet for these people's behaviors, it is tantamount to saying that bullets kill, not people, that drugs destroy, instead of drug users, and that we are worth nothing as individuals, save whatever societal label is posthumously placed on us.

One of the astronomers, who helped discover the comet which prompted cult members to kill themselves, Alan Hale, has his own opinions about the suicides.

"I'm not surprised (about the suicides)," Hale said in a statement on CBS news. "There is a lot of ignorance and superstition left in our society."

CBS is no exception.



# Texas Rep. Stiles flirts with antitrust allegations concerning A&M contract

The Texas Legislature has never been known as a bastion of ethics. Movies, television shows and pundits such as Molly Ivins have made a living recounting countless tales of crooked deeds. Austin is teeming with sordid stories of lawmakers spending long nights at the Driskill Hotel "interviewing" secretaries and collecting "campaign contributions" from "interested parties."

Columnist



Donny Ferguson  
Sophomore  
political science major

green cement trucks of the Transit-Mix Concrete Co. have rumbled through campus on their way to the construction next to Evans Library. One of Texas' largest concrete companies, Transit-Mix was awarded the contract to pour cement for the University's new library, computing/study complex and parking garage.

Transit-Mix, with headquarters at the port of Beaumont on the Neches River, has grown from a small, family operation into a near-monopoly in the East Texas concrete business. The company and its long-time president are both well-known.

State Rep. Mark W. Stiles of Fannett, chair of the House Calendars Committee and arguably one of the most powerful men in Texas, runs the huge corporation. First elected to the House in 1982 from Southeast Texas' 21st District, Stiles has padded his credentials as one of the most influential figures in the Legislature by serving as chair of the powerful Appropriations and Ways and Means committees. Something doesn't seem quite right when a man on the state payroll, who can determine whether pro-University legislation lives or dies, stands to make money from a public institution.

This isn't the first time Stiles has been in hot water concerning questionable contracting. The construction of Jefferson County's Mark W. Stiles Prison Unit required

large, expensive amounts of concrete. The company which was awarded the contract for the unit was none other than Mark W. Stiles' Transit-Mix. Some media scrutiny followed, but in a county where the Democrat Party machine is notorious for its power and influence, suspicions quickly subsided.

Stiles may or may not have used his influence to win a construction contract from a public institution. After all, Transit-Mix is a competitive company. It is so competitive it is driving competitors out of business and facing an antitrust lawsuit. What is clear is that Stiles' past contracting with taxpayer-funded institutions has raised serious questions about this Fannett Democrat's ethics.

No one can know for sure all the factors behind the University's decision to hire Transit-Mix to pour the concrete for the new construction. To charge Stiles with misusing his power would be unfair at this point. But what is obvious is that the contract borders on a conflict of interests. In fact, the code of ethics for A&M employees clearly states they should refrain from actions which give an appearance of impropriety. Unless Transit-Mix offered a surprisingly low bid, putting a powerful state legislator in a position to make money from a taxpayer-funded institution is suspicious. For the sake of his and the University's reputations, Rep. Stiles should stop seeking contracts from public institutions.

# A&M campus endures colorful makeup job from chalk artists

Over the past two weeks a colored dust has coated campus sidewalks, passing numerous messengers by discomfort and disgust. Despite numerous clean-up attempts by the University, this entity continues to plague the Texas A&M campus. Sidewalk chalk: the ever-present advertising craze of A&M.

Columnist



Glenn Janik  
Sophomore  
political science major

"good luck" for their friends in front of Heldenfels Hall. "Happy Birthday" and "I love you" messages are sometimes left by boyfriends and girlfriends, hoping to make a lasting impression on their significant other. And even the rare ad for a "Latin Party" or local band can be seen. All of these ads are usually done in a single area, and wear off in a day.

However, these benign ads mark a stark difference from the new messages beginning to proliferate across campus.

Prior to the Mar. 22 pro-choice rally at Rudder Fountain, student supporters took to campus sidewalks with buckets of chalk in hand. Soon, pro-choice ads could be seen across most of campus. Promotions for upcoming events were sprawled on the ground and even on the walls near A.P. Beutel Health Center.

In response to pro-choice messages, pro-lifers retaliated the next day. Creative pro-life chalk artists turned "Pro-Choice Rally" into "really murder." Other pro-life responses were "murderers" and "save the innocent children."

Regardless of whether Aggies are pro-choice or pro-life, watching

campus organizations fight ideological battles with sidewalk chalk is embarrassing to the University. Imagine visiting A&M as a high school senior and seeing "murderers" scribbled across the cement. Free speech is a hallmark of America, but the sidewalks of A&M are not soap boxes for organizations to spread messages.

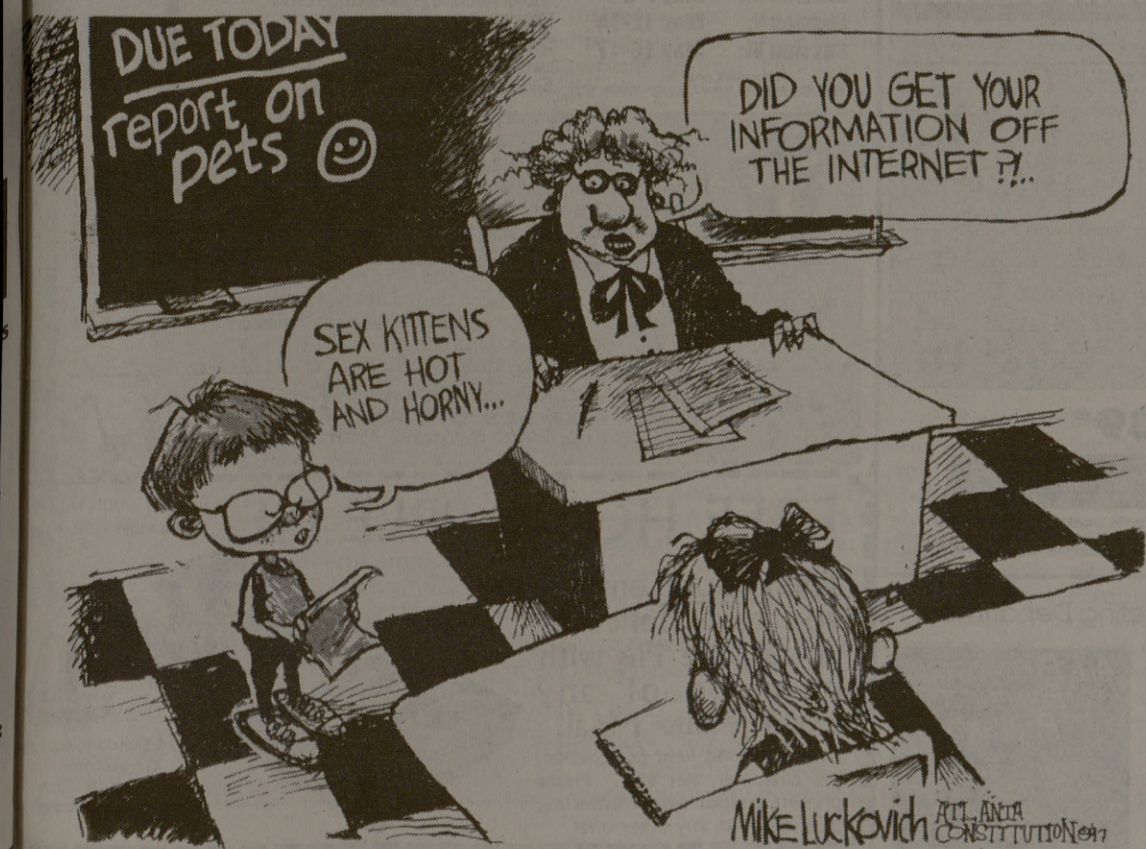
Last week, several Greek clubs decided to advertise "Derby Days" on A&M's walkways. One sorority was even bold enough to scribble a massive "delta" in front of Rudder Fountain. This symbol, large enough for a Marine helicopter to land on, was not only a colossal waste of chalk, but a distracting piece of graffiti.

Greek organizations may have a wonderful message to spread to students of A&M, but treating University property as a billboard is not only disrespectful to the meaning of the Rudder complex, but disgraceful to the organizations in question.

Every campus organization must deal with the pressing problem of advertising activities. A&M provides kiosks, MSC banner space and tables, and The Battalion offers a "What's Up" section to let students know what organizations are doing on and off campus. If A&M groups say more advertising is necessary, they can buy newspaper ads, receive free TV

time on CNN's *Home Front News* and free radio time on WTAW or simply use a phone bank to contact members. Enough outlets exist for publicity that groups do not need to resort to campus chalking.

Chalking is a bad reflection on all A&M students. It ruins the beauty of the University and forces the ground crews to spend extra time cleaning senseless graffiti. Walking across campus each morning, students should be able to enjoy the splendid trees and architecture of A&M. However, when students are confronted with a new batch of chalk scribbles everyday, the campus loses the luster of its appearance.



## MAIL CALL

### Cultural anthem not given respect

Monday night at the Kuumba Fest presented by the Black Awareness committee, I saw something that I was slightly offended by. When the time came to sing the Negro National Anthem, "Lift Every Voice and Sing," there were people who did not remove their caps.

That anthem is just as important to me as the Star-Spangled Banner. I feel it deserves just as much respect. Some people may not realize that there is such a thing as a Negro National Anthem.

Well there is, so let's all recognize it when it's announced and give it the respect given to our nation's anthem.

Mosadi Porter  
Class of '97

### Feminism teaches women's choice

In response to Courtney Phillips' Mar. 27 column.

Phillips states, the first and greatest lie of feminism is "You can have it all." She goes on to say this "you can have it all lie" preaches "self-esteem and empowerment above all. It should not surprise anyone that an answer containing 'self' cannot possibly be the answer to a problem of self-absorbed, self-actualized and self-centered culture."

First, Courtney Phillips herself seemed incredibly self-culture centered when she ended her column by quoting the Bible and saying that women should take faith not in themselves but in Jesus. News flash: Texas A&M is a public school and the entire student body is not composed of Christians.

The so-called feminist assertion that women can "have it all" simply means that women can have a family and a career. If that were not the case, half the women at Texas A&M would have to drop out. I see nothing wrong with having a value of self-worth and seeking both a career and a family. If Phillips believes that a respectable level of self-esteem is anti-Christian, I paraphrase the Apostle Paul who said that we should have neither an inflated nor deflated image of ourselves. In other words, know your own worth.

Secondly, Phillips states that "to be a good feminist, a woman must be aggressive, dominant, preferably moving up the corporate ladder and using her sexuality to assert power over men, all the while claiming to be valued totally for her intellect."

Feminists come in "all shapes and sizes" so to speak. A feminist is simply one who believes that women have the same worth as men and should be allowed to choose their own path in life.

Feminism is all about choice, and if a woman chooses not to enter the work force outside of the home, good for her. If she decides to have a child and pursue a career, good for her. If she decides not to have children, good for her.

Dawn Capp  
Graduate Student