

# Taking it to the extreme

## Activists sometimes miss intended goal of freeing animals, creating peace

WILLIAM "THE MINK" WALLACE



It can be assumed that no animal lover would support anyone who smashed aquariums in a pet store in order to free fish.

Likewise, anyone who opened gates at a ranch to free oppressed cattle or chickens to allow them access to their natural habitat would not be perceived as liberating animals, but causing mischief and loss of property.

The smashing of an ant farm in the name of liberation probably wouldn't do ants any good either. Without a mound or queen, the ants would die. The higher concept of a right to freedom isn't always in the best interest of the animal.

When unknown persons broke into a fur ranch in Mount Angel, Oregon, and released over 8,000 minks, they could not have believed what they did benefited the animals involved.

Soon after being thrust into freedom, the captive bred animals fought viciously, seriously wounding and killing thousands of each other. According to an Associated Press report, about 1,300 females were recovered.

Marsha Kelly, spokeswoman for Fur Commission U.S.A., said that the attack could be the latest incident in what is known as "eco-terrorism."

"The number of incidents seems to be escalating," Kelly said in the same AP report.

Ecoterrorists consist of militant activists who believe the breeding of animals only for slaughter or human use is inhumane.

Columnist



STEPHEN LLANO  
Senior history major

The incident in Oregon can hardly be classified as a step above inhumane treatment. Even if the minks were being treated poorly inside the cage, it doesn't make their lives outside the cage better.

The individuals responsible for releasing the animals may have had the freedom of the animals on their minds, but they did not have the well-being of the animal on the same level of thought. The concept of a right is at best an abstract and difficult concept for humans — to an animal, who relies primarily on instinct, it is beyond comprehension.

The lack of any thorough thought or planning for the best interest of the minks demonstrates the fundamental flaw of all terrorist action — coercion doesn't work. This action is ineffective and turns people against the cause it was based upon.

These individuals' lack of thought in their actions only allows one conclusion to be drawn from this incident — the perpetrators were more interested in the way they are perceived rather than the animals' lives.

Whether or not it is morally bankrupt to raise an animal from birth for the sole purpose of human consumption is irrelevant. The people who are financially hurt by this action won't think it's very relevant either. Anytime someone is forced to do something, the persuasive, or thinking element, is lost forever.

If a non-coercive method, such as writing the mink-farm owner a letter about the care of his animals, or peace-

fully distributing information to consumers, progress may have occurred.

These methods for progress might be slow, they might take some time, but they would work better than breaking and entering, taking someone's property and destroying it. The next time this fur rancher interacts with one of many animal rights groups out there, chances are his judgment will be clouded by this event.

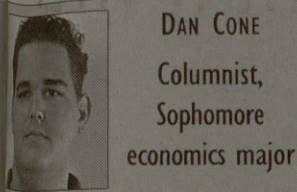
As for the perpetrators, they have harmed any good intent held for animal rights. They will be referred to as vandals, and rightfully named as such. Wanton destruction will never advance any message or mission.

There is no problem with being convinced of a certain viewpoint. Problems arise when activists believe they are above and beyond anyone else's viewpoint. When the mind is closed to questioning, how can the one view of the activist be incorrect? The enemy, in this case the fur farmer, isn't even worth talking about.

The more immersed in a position one becomes, the less reasonable and the more fanatical views become. The most devastating loss in this situation is not the property destroyed — it is the harm done to a possibly good and sound belief others could be convinced to understand.

Extremists are always dangerous. In the case of the vandalism in Oregon, the problem has left thousands of dead minks. But more tragically, the idea of animal rights has fallen dead at the feet of many would-be supporters due to this senseless and self-serving act.

## McVeigh, fellow constituents achieve social recognition



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guilty. More than two years after Timothy McVeigh and Terry Nichols completed their mission to bomb the P. Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City, the first verdict has been reached. The jury has now decided McVeigh's fate. Life or death are the only options now facing the jury. Hopefully they will choose correctly and allow McVeigh to live. Unlike the murderers, McVeigh's motivation was purely political. Killing him to death would only rationalize his stature and fuel a fire that could produce another Oklahoma City incident. The book which the FBI confiscated was the blueprint for the bombing, *The Turner Diaries*, as with the death of Earl Turner in the novel, Turner makes a martyr of himself by flying a nuclear warhead in a small plane to the Pentagon. While the bombing in Oklahoma City was as disastrous as a nuclear explosion, the shock of the event is no less extraordinary. If, as the FBI contends, McVeigh is so smug with becoming a hero, Turner, then death would be as a great triumph. Militia groups and extremists like McVeigh have become convinced that the federal government is trying to turn the United States into a police state. They believe that it is their patriotic duty to resist the tyranny of the government. As in *Turner Diaries*, most groups have resorted to arming themselves in preparation for a revolution. They look at events like the FBI standoff with white separatist Randy Weaver in Ruby Ridge, Idaho, in which Weaver's wife and son were killed by federal agents as an example of the government overstepping their bounds. The ATF raid and subsequent standoff at the Branch Davidian compound at Waco further damaged the government's credibility with militia groups. McVeigh is put to death, this would only place him in the same category as the Branch Davidians

and Ruby Ridge. April 19th, the day the Davidian compound was burned and also the Oklahoma City bombing, will become an unofficial holiday to groups such as the Freeman and the Republic of Texas. Like the men who fought at San Jacinto yelled, "Remember the Alamo," right wing extremists soon will be shouting "Remember Ruby Ridge" and "Remember Tim McVeigh."

This may seem as extreme as some of the beliefs held by these extremists, but it is very likely. The last thing the United States government needs is to create more reasons for groups such as the Freeman to resist the established forms of justice.

Vigilante and extremist groups are on the rise in the United States and their methods of raising attention are as varied as publishing information on the Internet to constructing and stockpiling weapons in anticipation for a battle with the government.

Stopping these groups will be harder than some think. The mistrust and paranoia associated with these groups prevents infiltration and dismantling of their organizations. Like the Freeman and Republic of Texas, separatist groups find remote and secluded areas to base their operations. These groups' stockpiling of weapons makes the events of Waco possibly minor in comparison to what other easily available weapons are capable of doing.

Federal legislation like the Brady Bill will not deter these organizations, either. Governmental restriction of arms and ammunition will only produce a black market industry that will make even more lethal weapons available to those who are willing to pay. In addition, further infringement upon the second amendment will push more individuals toward the extreme right.

McVeigh already has done his damage — there is no way to correct the emotional and political damage caused by his actions. The only justice which can be attained is to place him in a federal prison for life. McVeigh still will be able to speak and voice his opinion, but he will not achieve martyr status as he would if executed by the government that he and other extremists are fighting against.



### MAIL CALL

#### Rec Center policy debate continues

Do A&M officials stay up at night thinking of ways to make students' lives unnecessarily complicated and stressful? The recent Rec Center flap is the latest in a series of incidents where students have come up short. Consider the impact of rising tuition/fees and penalties, and inadequate parking. I would encourage students to take a stand on the Rec Center issue and not allow themselves to be slighted any longer.

The Rec Center should stand by its original policy of allowing students to purchase a summer pass, and local businesses should not be rewarded for manipulative tactics that undermine previous agreements. The argument that students who are not enrolled for a summer term are not entitled to use facilities is bogus and stinks of legalistic, technical jargon. Stu-

dents can show their strength by not utilizing local facilities or paying to use a facility that may renege on policies to appease local business owners rather than the students that it purports to serve. We all know how powerful peaceful protest can be.

Sonia R. King  
Graduate Student

Dennis Corrington's decision last week to rescind the policy of selling "continuing passes" to the Student Recreation Center is an insult to Aggies everywhere. Such a decision runs contrary to the goal of the Rec Center "to provide quality programs, services and facilities to a diverse Texas A&M community" — the same community that financed the construction and operation of the Rec Center.

Furthermore, the passes were eliminated without any input from the student body, the people most effected by the decision. To make such a decision retroactively, without any warning to those students who already had purchased passes, was both craven and callous. Because it was done without consulting or warning the student body shows that the University administration puts the needs of a few local businesses before those of the students they are here to help.

Students who oppose the cancellation of the continuing pass policy should write to the adminis-

tration and make their objections known. Unless students voice their opinions, the administration will take this as another sign that it can continue to ignore students in making decisions which affect them.

Mark Klobas  
Graduate Student

Concerning the Student Rec Center news story written by Jenara Kocks in the June 9th Battalion:

We have met with Corrington and are meeting with Southerland this afternoon to discuss the situation further. I am going to be in touch with the parties involved in the community today, and I am confident we can get this decision rescinded. Students are in the right, without a doubt.

Curtis Childers  
Student Body President  
Class of '98

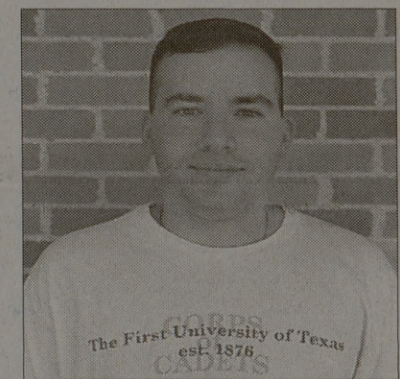
The Battalion encourages letters to the editor. Letters must be 300 words or less and include the author's name, class, and phone number.

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

## Campus Voice



PHOTOGRAPH: Tim Moog

Concerning the mentality of extremists in society:

“They try to do what they think is right, but take it too far ... groups like that are not in touch with today's world.”

Randy Trevino  
Junior political science major

