

Wednesday • September 3, 1997

The Aggie Code of Honor

Aggie thieves defame tradition of morality

Aggies lie, cheat, steal, and they don't tolerate those who do. Lying? Just ask any Aggie still going to the cops. Cheating has been a recognized dilemma at Texas A&M for years. And according to State Comptroller's Office figures, as noted by Tyrone Meighan and Steve Ray of the Harte-Hanks Institute on the Aggie Code of Honor, Aggies are the most dishonest thieves in all of Texas. The tell-tale numbers for fiscal year 1996 are as follows: 902 items reported missing/stolen and valued at \$2.79 million.



JOSHUA HILL
columnist

or, everyone was supposed to be accountable for one another. Now, it is generally understood that no one is accountable to anyone else.

Unfortunately, this tolerance has extended to include kleptomaniacs. Aggies wink at the crime on campus because it is the easy way out. Nabbing the vandals, thieves and cheaters who everyone knows is the uncomfortable and difficult duty that almost everyone avoids — it just isn't cool.

But now that the problem has escalated, the consequences of indifference may be even less cool.

According to Meighan and Ryan, the fastest disappearing items were computers, with lab science equipment at a close second.

"At Texas A&M, a \$1,440 Sony video camera disappeared less than two months after it was received, and two printers — one worth \$376 and the other \$488 — both were reported missing within 14 days," Meighan and Ray said.

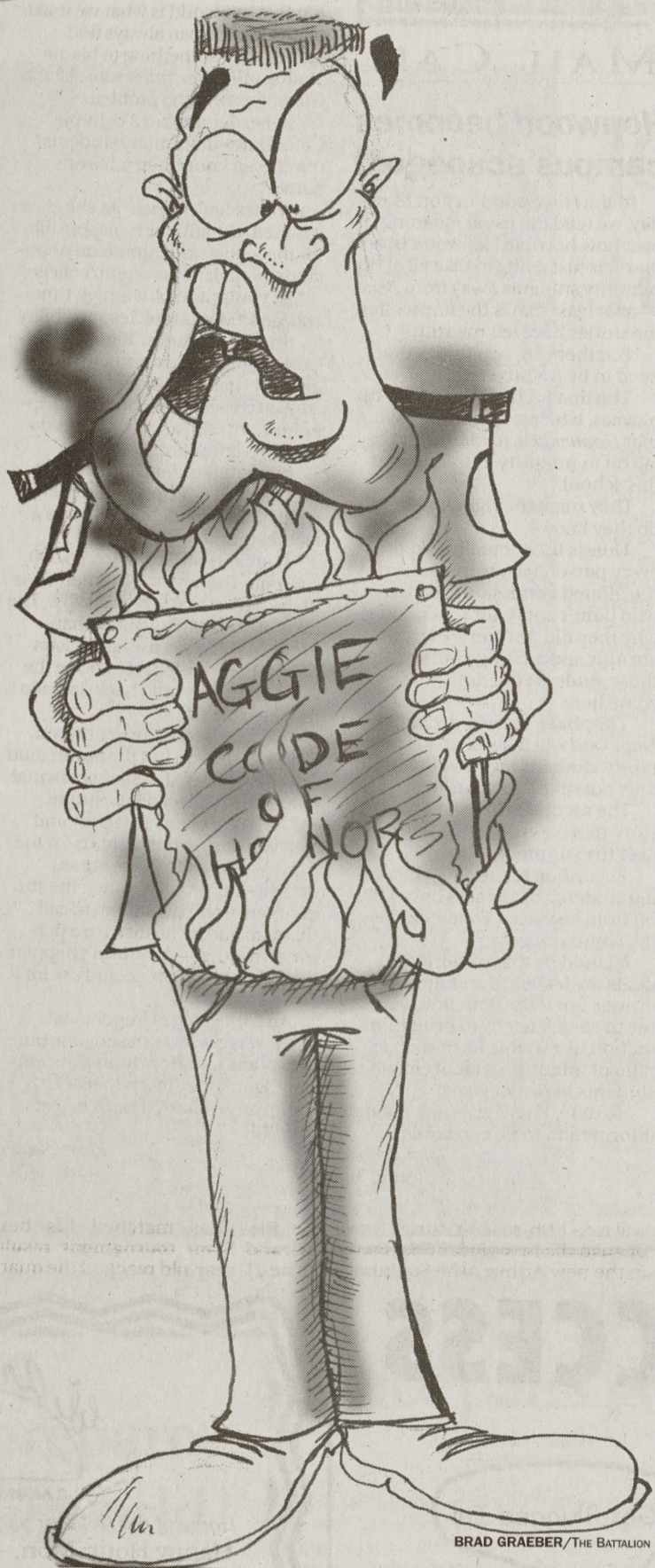
They quoted Bob Wiatt, director of campus police at A&M: "Computers are a coveted item and they are targeted quite a bit. We haven't had too many break-ins but most of the rooms are left unlocked because students and employees need 24-hour access."

If the situation doesn't change, the most probable result of Aggies "tolerating those who do" will be the reduction of privileges. The Board of Regents could initiate a special security charge on the fee statement to guard computer labs day and night, or they could just close everything down.

If students value their liberty to use University equipment almost all hours of the day, they must take care of it.

The difference will come out of students' hides one way or another if Aggies don't stop whimping out of their duties to their school and their society.

Joshua Hill is a junior English major.



BRAD GRAEBER/THE BATTALION

Good morals should define A&M attitudes

Aggies do not lie, cheat, steal nor tolerate those who do. Yeah, right.

Maybe some of these lies sound familiar: "Yes, I'm over 21," "I didn't know it was a 30-minute spot," or the age-old, "All our problems are due to the assistant coaches."

Sure Aggies don't cheat, but they do counterfeit parking tags or have classmates sign the roll sheet for them when they are absent from lectures.

If Aggies don't steal, why is every bicycle on campus securely fastened to an immovable hunk of metal or concrete?

This ethics void is not limited to the college campus. A recent study of the American workforce shows that 48 percent of U.S. employees admit to committing illegal or unethical acts within the past year. The list of acts varied from calling in sick when they feel fine to accepting kickbacks or forging signatures.

Americans have become callous toward many unscrupulous deeds. People flippantly give their word without even considering whether they intend to keep the commitment. Everyone knows people who schedule appointments with no intention of being punctual. This has become such a common occurrence that these late-comers are rarely chastised for failing to keep their commitment.

The biggest cause of this ethics void is pure selfishness. Employees embezzle funds because they feel they need the money more than big corporations. Because people have no regard for someone else's schedule, they don't mind "forgetting" an appointment.

The prime example of how selfishness leads to poor moral choices is the prevalence of prenuptial agreements. This agreement says, "Since I may be lying about 'until death do us part,' I want to be sure I get the best deal if I do break my word."

The flip-side of the wide-spread selfishness is a lack of consideration for others. Customers don't care if



DAVE JOHNSTON
columnist

they get extra change from a store clerk, even though cash drawer shortages often come from the employee's paycheck. Few people will correct a waiter when the bill was incorrectly figured in the diner's favor.

America is facing a real problem. Some employee screening firms estimate that retail stores lose more money to employee theft than shoplifting. But then, the mere existence of employee screening firms is alarming. Falsified resumes are so common that some companies pay employees to verify information provided by job applicants.

No one seems to care about poor moral character anymore. Americans expect politicians to lie. Our president has been assaulted by so many allegations of wrongdoing that they are no longer newsworthy.

In today's society, individuals are not even willing to accept blame when they do something wrong. Current society has lost the art of apology. Frequently, when a person does apologize, they manage to place the blame on someone else. For example, "I'm sorry that you were upset," or "I'm sorry but my boss was giving me a hard time."

More often, however, apologies never materialize. People seem much more fond of excuses. When Al Gore was accused of soliciting campaign funds using government resources, he claimed "there was no controlling legal body." He did not apologize. He did not claim to have acted within the law. He invented a brand new defense — there's no one to get me in trouble, so it's not a problem. This is an extreme of the ancient "no one caught me, so it's okay."

The Aggie Code of Honor is a good start. If only students stick to it. The key to encouraging others to maintain ethical standards is "not tolerating" unscrupulous acts. Politely let people know when you feel they have done something unacceptable. Encourage better morals by example. Perhaps if someone notices that a friend doesn't steal towels from hotel rooms, he or she will begin to wonder if such theft is a bad idea. Sometimes a person needs to be reminded that something is not "right" just because it's socially acceptable.

Dave Johnston is a senior math major.

'Aggies' defined by more than just paying fee statements

I wish the University wasn't so cheap. I realize there are a lot of students on campus, and Texas A&M is not a charity, but is it really too much to ask to have e-mail over the summer, even if (gasp) I am not currently enrolled in classes?

I called the number that appeared on the screen last summer along with the message that my e-mail account was inaccessible and posed that very question to the lady who answered. I was sharply informed that the University is not a private e-mail provider.

I know that. However, I'm not some private citizen off the street; I am a card-carrying Aggie.



ANNA FOSTER
columnist

How much can it possibly cost the University to treat me as such, year-round?

Now that a password is required to do anything on the computers in the computer labs, e-mail is just the beginning. The University has more power than ever to monitor and shut off computer access whenever it feels it is necessary.

This means that students who want to use the University computer resources over the summer or winter breaks could be shut out of the system if the University decides to make it policy to deny access to students not currently enrolled in classes.

Judging from past experience, I am not holding my breath that the University will keep access open for students between the spring and fall semesters.

That raises the question, then, of whether or not a student is truly an Aggie only if they are

paying tuition. The University certainly treats students as if this were the case.

There are many privileges that come with being an Aggie, only one of which is access to a wide variety of computer resources. Many of the privileges are intangible, like Aggie Spirit, and are paid for with more than just our fee statements; they are paid for by the students in their willingness to uphold the Aggie ideal, verbalized most strongly in the Aggie Code of Honor.

As an Aggie student, I strive to uphold the ideals of the Code of Honor, to "lead by example," as our parking tags say — especially when I'm away from campus, and all other Aggies will be judged by my actions. The Aggie Spirit does not take a vacation, and most students do not go on a three-month lying, cheating and stealing spree during the summer.

However, the University gives the impression

that it is not accountable to the same standards and only needs to treat students like Aggies once they have paid off our fee statements.

There should be some benefits to attending the best university in the world that extend past being able to say that one does.

It is hard to believe that a business as large as A&M cannot afford to sponsor something as simple as computer access for its students year-round, especially as one drives past the Rec Center, Reed Arena and the construction around Kyle Field.

It would be a worthy investment for the University, not only to make its current students happy, but also to give the impression to the world that students still matter on the A&M campus.

Anna Foster is a junior journalism major.



MAIL CALL

Greek involvement ignored in column

Response to Mandy Cater's Aug. 29 column on sororities:

First of all I would like to comment on some of the more ignorant parts of the article. Sororities do not "aim" to be social and service organizations, they really are.

Not just sororities, but Greeks in general raise massive amounts of money for a large variety of charities. I'm fairly certain that the beneficiaries of these contributions do not begrudge us because we wear Greek

letters. Second, if you take a look around campus, you'll find that a lot of the most involved Aggies also belong to a sorority or fraternity.

Speaking on behalf of my sorority alone, we have girls that are heavily involved in student government, Fish Camp, T-camp, Howdy Camp, MSC Hospitality, COSGA, Muster, Parents Weekend, Aggie Hostesses, 30-Loes, Diamond Darlings, Aggie Angels, Replant, Big Event, and even The Battalion, all of which help to perpetuate the traditions of A&M. So we're not just about cute outfits and bank statements.

I'm in a sorority and I will be the first to admit that we have some superficial sides, but there is more to us. I came to this school without knowing a single person and I thought joining a sorority would help me to adjust. To coin a more popular phrase, I decided to "just trii it" and I love it. I do not have the "sorority girl" look (and there were no "fashion demerits" given), I don't have a lot of money, and I don't even wear silver. But I've made some of the closest

friends I've ever had and I don't regret a single moment. I do not feel that I'm selling myself out or that I bought my friends. Maybe joining a sorority isn't for everyone, but does an immature and uninformed bashing of the Greek system really make anti-Greeks any better than us?

*Jennie Whitman
 Class of '99*

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