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Welcome to the bathhouse

Restroom watchdog system invades personal privacy, erases common sense

Ok. Quit playing with it and wash your hands. That's the general idea behind what most of us have been taught about bathroom hygiene. Until now.



MASON JACKSON
columnist

If the privacy assassins from Net/Tech International have their way, a Hygiene Guard will be installed in every employee bathroom in the United States, taking childhood upbringing and common sense completely out of the equation.

It will use a system of computers, tracking software and infrared technology to determine whether employees choose to wash their hands or go "au naturel."

The system, already in place at the Tropicana Casino and Resort in Atlantic City, makes employees wear an electronic badge that blinks and flashes if the employee doesn't spend the required amount of time in front of the sink. Better sanitation through humiliation — what a concept.

Sure, we all want to avoid germs and the illnesses they can cause, but this is the wrong way to go about it for two completely different reasons. The first issue to be concerned with is that of personal privacy — there are just some places that you should not go. Though some people would consider this an acceptable trade-off between privacy and public health, it must be looked at as an unprecedented setter.

It starts with monitors in the john, eventually we have safe sex monitors in the bedroom (talk

about pressure). This may seem unlikely, but sex is also a public health issue, and what may seem an unacceptable step now may be achieved with little fanfare through a series of smaller more acceptable steps.

The second reason to oppose the widespread adoption of the Hygiene Guard is to preserve the dignity of the human species.

Imagine, if you will, an alien visitor to our fair planet. Though at first impressed with our level of advancement for such a relatively young species, this visitor becomes perplexed at the sight of the blinking badges that everyone seems to be wearing.

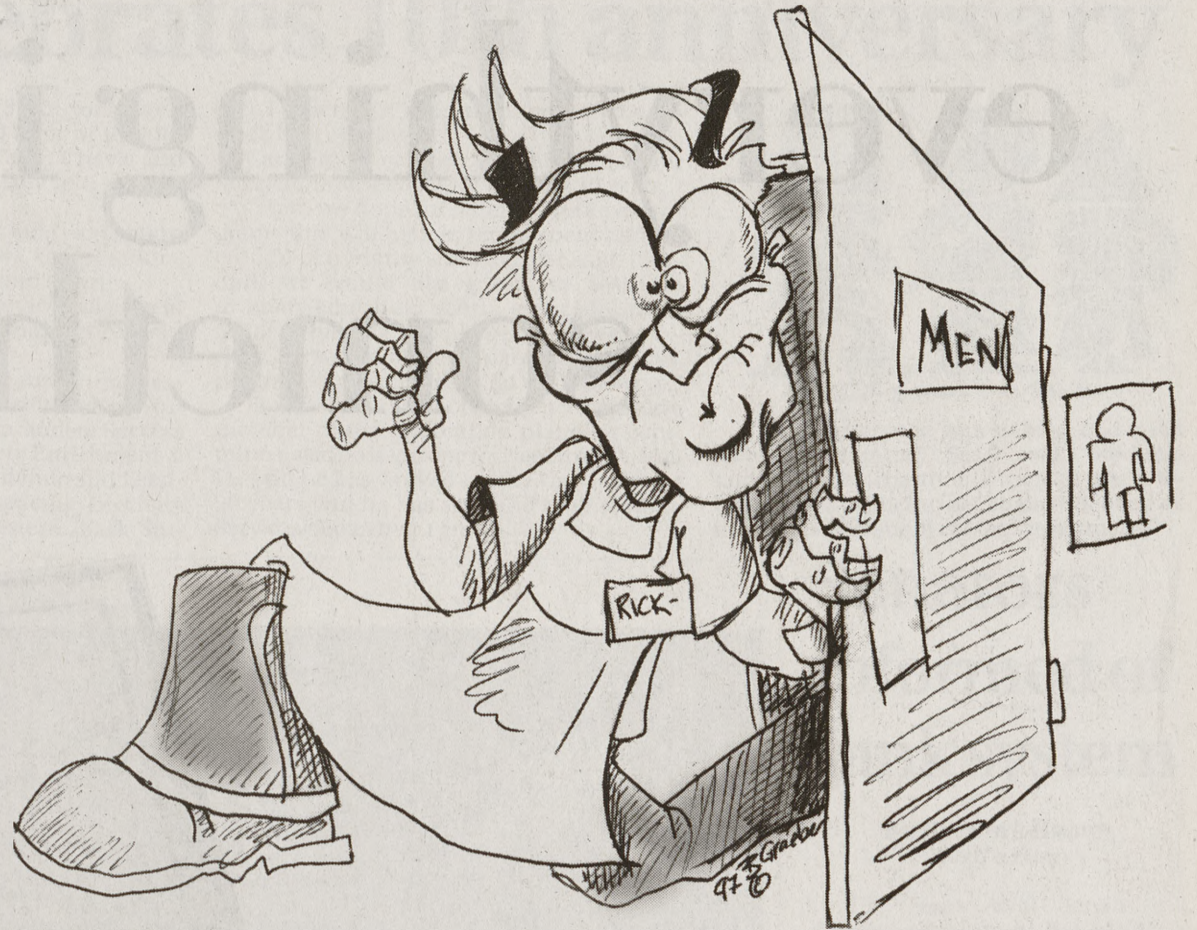
Once the alien finds out that the badges are to remind us to cleanse ourselves after excreting waste, we're not going to look all that cool. And image is everything.

If people really want to do something about the spread of disease from bacteria, then the practice of irradiation should be embraced. Irradiation is the process of sending gamma rays through food to kill bacteria, mold, etc. It is a practice that is as harmless, and as potentially beneficial, as pasteurization, but it has not been widely adopted because the generation currently in control was conditioned to be so scared of the bomb that they think that anything involving radiation couldn't possibly be safe.

Somebody needs to rethink that idea over a nice undercooked prime rib dinner served to you at a steak house where the employees are so sophisticated they not only wash their hands after going to the bathroom, but they also wear clothes.

Impressive isn't it?

Mason Jackson is a senior marketing major.



Celebrated university, small town feel provide advantages

Many students on this campus are from Dallas, Houston or some other large city or suburb.

Some of these people are my friends, and have imparted their own personal observations about this "po-dunk hick town" we live in and how it compares to their hometown metropolis. Most of the comparisons are not favorable, and center on the lack of things many large-city dwellers have become accustomed to having close at hand.

The new class of freshmen is no different, and are forming opinions on their new living environment every minute. In order to offer a slightly different perspective on the town, I present a short list of why it is a good thing that College Station is a small town, so that the freshmen can judge fairly.

For starters, College Station is not actually a small town. Farwell, Tx. (pop. 1,373) is a small town. The Brazos Valley comprises about 130,000 people, with College Station itself claiming over 55,000 residents.

That is five times the amount of people in all of Palmer County, where Farwell is located. For those students from major metropolitan areas that have trouble adjusting to life in College Station, imagining a town even smaller is almost impossible.

While it is difficult to compare even College Station and a town like Farwell, one thing that is the same is the sense of community. I think it has something to do with people being nice to each other here.

For one thing, the traffic is many times better than it is in any city. If the worst thing drivers in this area have to contend with is Texas Avenue at 5:00 P.M. and 8:00 A.M., they are much better off than the millions of people trying to navigate the streets and highways of Texas' larger cities.

Most of the time, any destination in College Station or Bryan is not more than ten or fifteen minutes by car from any other place.

Also, there is not as much crime in this area. While far from being crime-free, there is a marked difference in people's fears about crime when they reside in College Station as compared to when they are in a city such as Houston or San Antonio.



ANNA FOSTER
columnist

Another advantage is a majority of the businesses in town cater to students' needs. It is a privilege, and definitely a benefit, to live in a town created entirely around college students.

The shops, restaurants, clubs and other businesses depend on the students' patronage to survive. Many businesses, therefore, have a vested interest in pleasing the students, which usually means good deals for strapped college budgets.

The biggest complaint heard about College Station, though, is the supposed lack of entertainment options. This is nonsense.

Without even listing the extensive choices of things to do on campus, opportunities by the dozens exist in the community.

The mall has more stores than it knows what to do with, the movie theater is huge and shows everything worth seeing and a lot of stuff that's not, and there are bars and clubs to fit almost every taste.

Pizza parlors and delivery food stores abound, and almost every popular chain restaurant has a representative in Bryan or College Station; not to mention several colorful local places to eat.

The Opera and Performing Arts Society ensures programs of culture reach the community, and lectures and conferences occur frequently on campus to expose students to intellectual leaders from around the country.

Fortunately, College Station is centrally located between Houston, Austin and Dallas. Students can easily drive to concerts and other events not occurring in town.

In a town with over 43,000 college students between the ages of eighteen and twenty-three, if someone still claims to be unable to find something to do, that is more a personal problem than the fault of the town.

Texas A&M University is a first rate school, and College Station is a pleasant place to live. Students at A&M have the rare opportunity to attend a large university while living in what feels like a small town.

For many students, this will be the only time they live in a place that doesn't have suburbs. For them, this is a remarkable experience they should make the most of while they are here.

Anna Foster is a junior journalism major.

Sacred traditions must be preserved by student body

The past year has been a trying one for tradition at Texas A&M. Some traditions which have come under fire have been relatively new and seemingly minor, such as the loss to Texas two years ago. In one day, two traditions were shattered, that of not losing at Kyle Field and that of not losing to t.u.



ROBBY RAY
columnist

But more recently, other traditions have been threatened. In the last year, fraternities and units of the Corps of Cadets have been disbanded for hazing violations. Then this summer, one of the most widely known and respected organizations on campus, the Fish Drill Team, was disbanded in the midst of a prolonged legal battle also concerning hazing. If we are not more careful, these things which make us unique will be gone forever.

In the past, it has been tradition that has been instrumental in creating and maintaining campus unity. Traditions give us common ground as well as time and situations that encourage us to bond as students and as people. Many Aggies look back after graduation and fondly remember the times they spent at Bonfire or in the Corps, or in-

most widely-known and respected organizations. The long legal battle and controversy preceding the actual disbanding only added to our disgrace.

This is yet another case in which the stupid and careless actions of a few have dishonored the entire University. These allegations hurt more than just those directly involved. Imagine what it must be like to go into an interview and have to deflect questions about your possible involvement in a criminal activity. Merely the hint of such a scandal might be enough to cause a prospective employer to overlook an innocent but nonetheless tainted Aggie in favor of a student from a less controversial university.

Aggies still have many traditions which are not as yet polluted by the stigma of hazing. Because of A&M's uniqueness and individuality as an institution, Aggies have to keep their noses cleaner than others who are not so visible.

Aggie traditions and Code of Honor are widely known and respected, and as a result, we have to live up to a higher standard. In the last year, Aggies have dropped the ball and let their university, their Aggie predecessors and themselves down. The future needs to be better, or much of A&M's hard-earned reputation as a world-class university could be in jeopardy.

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Robby Ray is a senior speech communications major.



MAIL CALL

ICC deemed a cult by concerned Aggie

I would like to commend The Battalion for reporting on the "planting" of an International Churches of Christ (ICC) congregation here in College Station. However, as a member of the mainstream churches of Christ, I would like to clear up some possible misconceptions.

First, the mainstream churches of Christ, or the Aggies For Christ (a Christian

group here on campus whose members predominately come from the mainstream churches of Christ), are not in any way associated with the ICC. Most members of the churches of Christ consider the ICC a cult due to their practices, especially the practice of "discipling."

In the past, the International Churches of Christ have managed to destroy mainstream churches of Christ campus ministries (for example, Georgia Tech). Here at Texas A&M, members of the Aggies For Christ and members of the local churches of Christ are trying to keep that from happening.

As a member of both Aggies For Christ and the churches of Christ, I would ask that anyone approached by the ICC keep their minds open and seek out all the information on this cult before making any decisions.

The Campus Ministry Association and the ministers at a local church of Christ should be able to provide you with information. Also, www.reveal.org provides good information on the Internet about the ICC.

John A. Heffington
Class of '98

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