

# Acknowledging the problem

## Students should not tolerate alcohol abuse; task force aims to decrease consumption

"Hello, my name is [redacted] Texas A&M University, and I have [redacted] drinking problem."

While the wording wasn't quite so dramatic, the message conveyed was essentially the same.

Two weeks ago, Dr. J. Mal-Southerland released a statement addressing the negative effects of alcohol on this University.



**JOHN LEMONS**  
columnist

Southerland so astutely pointed out in his announcement of the alcohol task force, "The majority of violations of Texas A&M rules such as hazing, vandalism, assault and sexual assault involve alcohol."

Frighteningly, many students are unable or unwilling to acknowledge the strong connection between alcohol and negative behavior at this university.

At the heart of A&M's alcohol problem is students' attitudes and beliefs about alcohol.

Dr. Dennis Reardon, coordinator of the Department of Student Life Alcohol and Drug Education Programs, said that college students seem to buy into the myth that alcohol abuse is part of the normal college experience.

"One of the things we have to do from this office is de-emphasize the misconception students have

about drinking," Reardon said. "The reality is less than a third of college students abuse alcohol."

Hopefully, the alcohol task force will make recommendations that are effective in encouraging Aggies to use alcohol responsibly. To that end, here are some ways in which alcohol abuse can be combated at A&M:

- First, student leaders need to take action on the issue. For example, the Yell Leaders could designate one midnight yell practice as a "dry" yell practice. Only sober individuals would be invited to attend the yell practice.

- Imagine a yell practice where the crowd is swaying because of the wobbly bleachers at Kyle Field instead of their inability to maintain their drunken balance.

- Members of student organizations which have al-

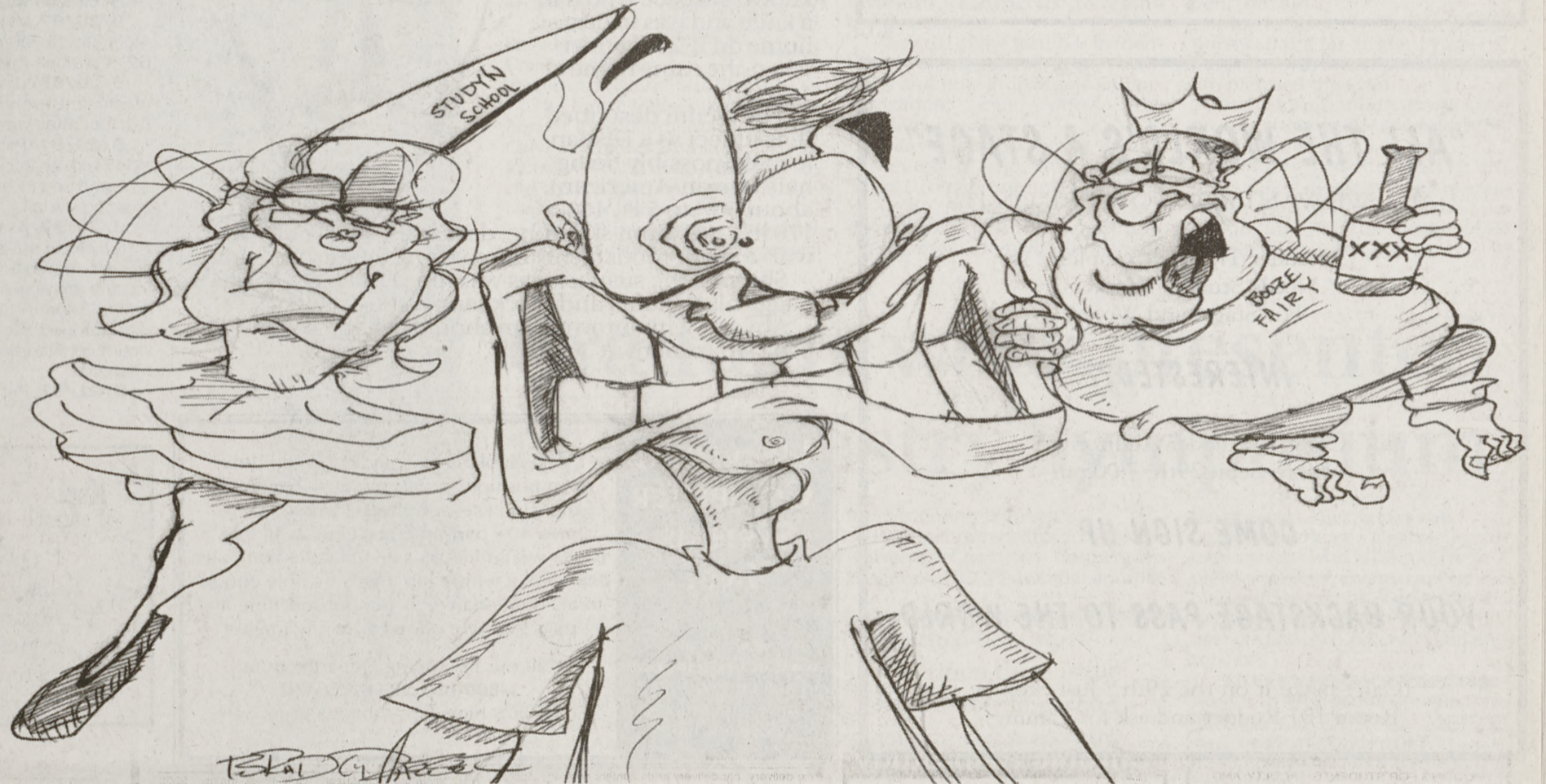
cohol at any of their social events could be required to attend a mandatory alcohol education program.

- Furthermore, successful programs like the "Keep Alcohol from Shattering the Tradition" education program that occurs during Bonfire could be expanded to other campus activities like Rush and football games.

Real changes in Aggies' behavior toward alcohol, however, will not occur until the majority of students who do not abuse alcohol decide they will not tolerate alcohol abuse among their peers. For too long, Aggies have treated alcohol recklessly and frivolously.

Fortunately, A&M is beginning to realize it.

*John Lemons is an electrical engineering graduate student.*



What's impressive about Southerland's statement, however, isn't the startling news about A&M's obsession with the "sauce," but that somebody is going to do something about it.

Southerland is appointing a task force of students, staff and faculty to study alcohol abuse at A&M. It is an idea whose time has come, as alcohol is A&M's biggest problem.

Aggies know alcohol. In fact, Aggies know alcohol at least as well as they know calculus, Shakespeare and the other academic trivialities that cross their desks between Thursday night drinking binges.

As evidence of Aggies' expertise in imbibing the spirits, consider the University Police Department's numbers on alcohol related citations over the last year. Between September '96 to August '97, UPD issued 181 MIP citations, 76 public intoxication citations, 34 providing alcohol to a minor citations and 49 DWIs.

What is interesting about these numbers, though, is that they do not represent all Aggies because only about a quarter of A&M students live on campus.

Numerous clashes with law by Aggies, exposes the often ignored problem of alcohol abuse on campus. One of the factors that encourages alcohol abuse at A&M is that there is very little stigma attached to students drinking excessively. Aggies have become so accustomed to seeing their peers stumble back home in a drunken stupor that they accept the behavior as the norm. Furthermore, many Aggies are proud of their drinking behavior. It is not uncommon to see walls of Aggies rooms lined with empty alcohol bottles.

A&M's alcohol problem, however, is not caused by alcohol. Instead, it stems from individuals who are unable to use alcohol responsibly.



### Columnists should challenge students

In response to John Burton's Sept. 25 Woodoo Lounge column:

Finally, The Battalion has ceased its reign as the Texas A&M right wing propaganda machine and moved into the realm of quasi-journalism.

After a year of hard-right wing column after hard-right wing column, Burton's humorous observations about the George Bush Library are a welcome change.

Although we might not all agree with the diverse opinions of columnists like John Burton, Mike Schaub and even Donny Ferguson (probably all members of the Aggie Democrats disagree), the Opinion page should strengthen our beliefs by challenging them, not by showing them deeper down our throats.

*Jeff Miller  
Class of '98*

### Football remarks show disrespect

In response to Michelle Voss' Sept. 26 Passing the Pigskin column:

Her remarks that football fans are brainless, beer-bonging, puking fanatics is just plain ignorant. Neither I, nor the tens of thousands of other Aggies and millions of Americans who watch football fit that description.

Second, Voss seems to think that the University should fund music and arts majors rather than renovate Kyle Field.

I could write a half page column with a myriad of impressive vocabulary words and creative little comments about that, like she did with football.

I could make statements saying all arts and music majors are a bunch of espresso-chugging, tree-hugging, whimpering losers who can't even do long division but they sure can philosophize about not having a job.

But I do not do that because comments such as those not only show a lack of intelligence, but more importantly, they show a lack of respect for others, whose only fault is having interests that differ from yours.

*Cecil Cheshier  
Class of '96*

### Graglia comments warrant response

The columns about Professor Lino Graglia brought up the issue of race and free speech.

After reading Michael Sawilowsky's Mail Call letter and hearing Graglia's comments, I remembered an old saying about racism: The more things change, the more they remain the same.

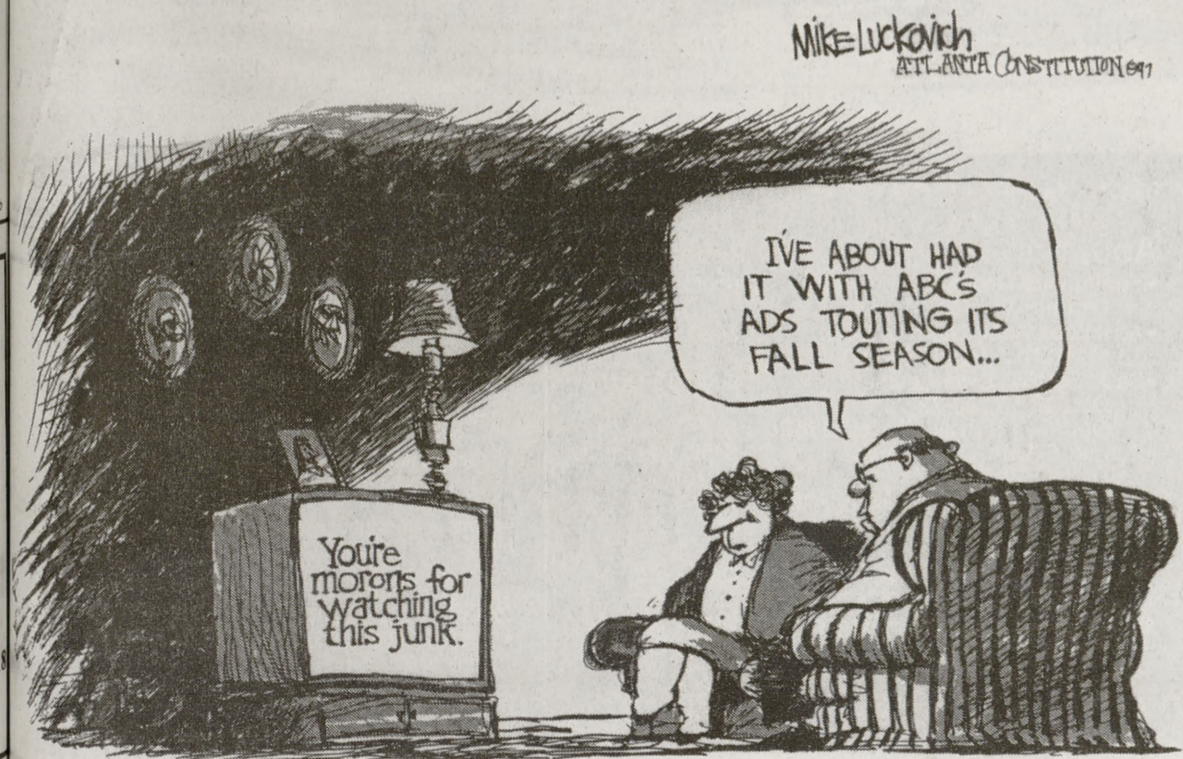
Since Graglia and Sawilowsky have a hard time noticing Mexican and African-American achievement, allow me to describe a predominantly African-American school that is 45 miles west of Houston — Prairie View A&M.

Throughout the years Prairie View A&M has competed against other schools in various competitions and has consistently finished at or near the top.

As demonstrated by its students and alumni, it is a top-notch institution. Those are just a few accomplishments of the school, and people representing different ethnic backgrounds, including Mexican-Americans, attend the school.

On free speech, those protesters have as much of a constitutional right to denounce Graglia's statements as he did in making them.

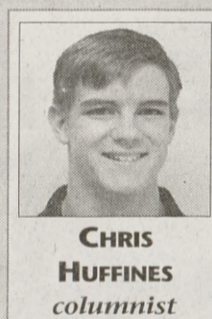
*Earl Smith  
graduate student*



*MIKE LUCKOVICH  
ATLANTA CONSTITUTION '97*

## Switching currency from paper to coins will help America grow

In this country, we are looking the future right in the eyes, and glancing shyly away because it's not polite to stare.



**CHRIS HUFFINES**  
columnist

Meanwhile, the past is sneakily tapping us on the shoulder, trying to give good advice. In this country and others around the world, paper money is becoming obsolete.

Counterfeiting is becoming too prevalent and sophisticated to allow paper bills to continue to be manufactured. Minor bills, \$20 or less, should be replaced with coins.

According to the Department of the Treasury, paper money was not even issued until the Civil War, and then only due to a shortage of coins. Apparently, people were hoarding them in case their side lost. During the war, this shortage became such a problem that the government printed bills as low as one cent.

Most paper money doesn't last that long, either. One-dollar bills only last 18 months on average. Five-dollar bills last about two years, \$10 bills three, and \$20 bills only last four years. In 1995, over four billion new \$1 bills had to be printed, at a cost of over \$175,000,000.

Even with the new measures taken to reduce counterfeiting — special inks, watermarks and plastic strips — there remains the simple fact that these can be duplicated, and that implementing these measures across the more than 8.5 billion bills printed yearly at \$20 or less will increase the cost dramatically, especially since none of these bills last more than five years.

There are two solutions.

The first is to move completely to debit cards, nation-wide Aggiebucks. There are three little problems here. The first is that those card readers come at about \$1,500 apiece. Just putting one in every store in America could get a little expensive politically, ensuring the system will not be adopted, unless for some strange reason your friend Al Gore hitches up his horse-drawn buggy to joy-ride on the Information Superhighway.

This would also require cutting out money completely, which would make things like taking tolls, mailing in PTTS fines and having your pocket picked quite interesting for the consumer. The third problem is that this simply relocates counterfeiting to a new plane, with the electronic bourgeoisie able to control money, leaving the electronic proletariat, people who, like our parents, can't even program their VCRs, at their mercy. Plus magnetic coders are cheap, cheaper than the printing presses now used to counterfeit paper money.

The better solution is to move to coin money in all denominations less than \$50. Fifty-dollar bills and higher last 10 years or more, which makes proofing them against counterfeiters more cost-effective. Coins, on the other hand, last much longer, metal being less susceptible to the general wear and tear of life than paper. Another benefit is that this would foil a lot of counterfeiting.

Counterfeiting coins requires more skill and better equipment than faking a bill, which any backwoods hick with the right paper, a color copier and a lazy cashier can pull off. Proofing coins against counterfeiting is a low priority, since currently coins aren't valuable enough to copy. However, with the technical exper-

tise that went into improving the \$100 and \$50 bills, coins can be stamped, making them harder to duplicate by counterfeiters, and easier to use for the general public.

Yes, coins are easier to use for the general public. Aside from the fact that it's easier to steal a quiet wallet than a jingling bunch of coins, coins are more intuitive than bills. All bills look the same from more than 10 feet away — a little green rectangle with a dark green border. Coins, with their distinctive metals and sizes, are much easier to tell apart. At 10 feet, a penny can be recognized from a quarter or a dime. It also is much easier to pick out four quarters than to riffle through a wallet looking for a dollar bill among a jungle of green.

Most civilized countries these days have moved to coins to represent their smallest denominations. The Canadians have one- and two-dollar coins, the British have pound coins, the Germans have the Deutschmark and so on. Instead of letting our great country languish in the third world of currency development, the United States of America should leap ahead of our neighbors, converting everything up to \$20 bills into coins. This would be an international one-up on a scale not seen since the days of old wartime victories.

Paper money may be lighter, cheaper to make and require 4,000 double-folds to tear, but coins are harder to counterfeit, they last a lot longer and they are easier to use. In almost every practical area, coins are superior to bills. This country should step forward and embrace the future by throwing aside the vulnerable, outdated paper bills and moving toward the use of coined money.

*Chris Huffines is a sophomore speech communications major.*