

One last round of drinks

Students must abandon childish acts of drinking to survive in college



**LEN
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columnist

Beer, smoke, sweat, shoulder to shoulder to shoulder crowds of drunk-fools and crappy pop-40 tunes blaring the point of distraction and static — these images can vividly be found Wednesday through Saturday night at my bar or club in the College Station and a couple of Bryan locales.

Lately, my ambition to throw down a raggle o' brewskies and sweat my proverbial butt off fighting the crowds has not been its old self. It's really quite disturbing. I can remember (sort of) nights, not too long ago, when I would have been in the pulsating mass of fools doing their best to spend every cent they have in the name of a good drink. I can remember days without class (or with them for that matter) I spent sitting on some veranda reminiscent of Old Mexico, drinking homemade margaritas until my vision began to blur, then switching to beer and continuing on like a rooper until I was blinded by the sauce. Only after an appropriate amount of vendetta time was it necessary to proceed to the preordained festival spot.

Once on the scene, the real malay began. An immediate trip to the bar for shots and chasers was mandatory. Back in the day, when one entered a room full of sweaty, drunken kids who were out of their minds it was important to go directly to the bar and take a couple of shots to show the crowd that you came to party. After sweating, smoking, drinking and yelling into my friends' ears for a couple of hours, the bouncers would always make their obligatory "Get out, we have lives too"

speech and throw everybody out the door. You guys know what is coming next. These nights were never complete without the 3 a.m. stop at a fast food restaurant. Immediately after eating, the alcohol induced state of unconsciousness became reality.

One might be compelled to think that since I've passed out, the fun is over for the night. Wrong. Without fail, somewhere around 6 a.m., the lovely over-drinking pastime called barforama would begin. Barforama time was a special time, indeed. My favorite part was always when my stomach would lift the evening's libations up my innards with such force that I could feel my eyes bugging out of their sockets, while every drop of blood in my body simultaneously rushed into my face.

All of the food, only three or four old, never tasted as good coming back up. Barforama time was always followed with 10 or 12 aspirin to numb the pain in my head.

Finally, after the aspirin had a chance to take effect on my newly emptied stomach, I would eventually get back to sleep.

So after consuming ridiculous amounts of booze, a couple of packs of smokes and a combo meal, I would wake up only to get slapped with a blistering headache the moment standing became an ambition. Laying in bed wondering what happened to me last night was always a real hoot because all drunks operate on roughly the same time schedule, and the calls would begin coming.

"Hey, man, are you okay? What did we do last night? Where did we go? Are there any phone numbers in your pocket? No? Mine either. What do you want to do today? It depends on what time the drive-thru beer store opens, because the game comes on at noon, and I don't have the energy to walk."

Those were the days — not a care in the world other than whatever is on the syl-

labus for tomorrow's class and sometimes even that did not matter.

The most incredible and sobering injustice that life has to offer has recently been exercised on me. I have lost the will to party.

I know some of us are still under the impression that the events and actions described above are the only way to spend a weekend. Well guess what geniuses, your quite wrong. Yep, it's official that some of us have grown up. As horrible as it sounds, I believe it to be true. Don't be scared kids, my dad says it happens and not to worry. It happens to almost everyone.

The time must come for us all when the proper course of action is to leave the drunken scene behind and seek out less destructive pastures. The good part about it is that I'm not sad to see the times go. Once one gets all of the barley and hops out of their brain, the old protons and electrons begin to fire a little faster. Suddenly, being sober for extended periods of time kind of becomes fun again.

One eventually begins to realize that these times were not that fun anyway, but they were therapeutic to a degree — as therapeutic as voluntary vomiting and self-induced migraines can be anyway.

It is preferred to gather with a few friends and socialize without feeling like having to drink one's self into a stupor.

It is not the liquor that is the problem; it is the attitude that drinking to such major excess is a positive and that some feel that they must drink to fit in. Besides, driving is easier without worrying about injuring someone, yourself or having the police pull you over. You wake up with all of your money, most of your smokes and without a hangover. Think about it Ags — it's really a much better way to live.

Len Callaway is a junior journalism major.



People should realize damaging effects of alcohol abuse

Beer seems to be an essential ingredient for a college weekend. Students get together, pass around the bottles, impair their judgment, lose consciousness, feel violently ill the next morning and some will not remember the previous evening.

They insist it is fun, but it is nothing but frightening.

Alcohol is a destructive force on campus and in the United States. Students and society must realize its awful affects and refuse to tolerate its use.

Alcohol and its abuse is most prevalent on college campuses. This school year already has heard tragic stories of students whose "night of fun" ended in death. Students at both LSU and MIT died of alcohol poisoning.

A chemical this potent should be heavily regulated. It is more dangerous than many illegal drugs and



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stronger than several prescription medications.

Someone who is drunk is no longer able to act responsibly. No matter what myths exist on campus, responsibility is always a virtue. Alcohol has a terrible impact on the binge drinker's body. Over years, this poison destroys the liver and kills brain cells. Unfortunately, the health benefits can often be more immediate — memory loss, coma or death.

Alcohol causes over 100,000 deaths in the United States each year (for those of you keeping score at home, that is as many Americans killed each year as during the entire Vietnam and Korean Wars combined). Alcohol is deadly, and designating a driver does not guarantee safety.

Most students who drink do not "drink to get drunk." But other drinking habits are also dangerous and foolish.

Many people use liquor to relax or unwind at the end of the day. Since the body develops a tolerance to alcohol, it will take more and more to achieve the same effects. The occasional drinker may not be aware of the fact they are increasing their intake. Besides, anyone who regularly uses a mood-altering

drug (stronger than many prescription options) needs to pay attention to a deeper problem.

A similar group of people only drink socially. Perhaps they will not become one of the 15 million alcoholics in the United States. Maybe they will be responsible and never harm themselves or someone else, but alcohol is still a foolish choice.

Even one drink impairs judgment. Even if the social drinker acts responsibly and does not operate any heavy machinery (imagine being in no condition to mow a yard), no wise person would voluntarily dispose of their faculties. No one can be sure they will not need to be alert within the next few hours.

A few drinkers partake of the spirits because they like the taste. These folks may not face the same problems and risks of other drinkers, but they should still stop and weigh the costs of their past dealings with alcohol. Anyone who drinks alcohol is playing with fire. Though it may never become a serious problem chances are it will cause some bad aftereffects.

Many people like to take comfort in the notion that in small doses alcohol is not harmful and may actually be healthy. The fact is alcohol will likely

harm the body and never do it any good.

A few studies suggest certain amounts of alcohol are beneficial, but there are far more studies refuting these conclusions.

Americans spend over \$22 billion a year on alcohol (about the same number of federal dollars are spent on education). Alcohol is expensive, risky and its use leads too easily to abuse. It can cause depression, violence, dependency, illness, death or countless other damaging consequences.

Today's society holds tobacco in contempt and accepts widespread alcohol use and abuse. No one smokes a pack of cigarettes then wraps his or her car around a tree. Alcohol presents a far more violent threat physically and emotionally.

Liquor flows freely at Texas A&M. Students need to wake up before they are caught in its disastrous wake. The decision to drink is an important one. Students should remember that alcohol will probably damage the body, and will never do it any good.

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MAIL CALL

Sin is sin, no matter what form it takes

Response to all the Mail Call letters concerning Coming Out Week:

I am somewhat disturbed by the collective mindset of many of Texas A&M's students.

First of all, we must realize that God does not hate the gay man or lesbian woman.

On the other hand, The Bible is plain in its concern dealing with homosexual relationships.

We must realize that sin is sin, whether it be in the form of homosexuality or fornication.

Yes, God loves the sinner but hates the sin. We must pray for the homosexual and the lesbian, as well.

As flesh, we all have the ability to fail pray to temptation. But, we do not have to accept this lifestyle

as normal or as an alternative.

Life is made up of two alternatives, that being right or wrong, righteous or unrighteous.

If an individual chooses the so-called "alternative lifestyle," he or she has made a decision that opposes not only The Bible, but also nature itself.

So the question arises: What must we do about all of this?

We must pray for a change in today's American society.

We must also recognize sin as sin, and wrong as wrong.

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Protection from natural disasters should be responsibility of citizens

Recent years have seen a dramatic increase in the amount of damage resulting from natural disasters. From floods and mudslides to blizzards and tornadoes, there is no doubt that Mother Nature has unleashed some of her most powerful and destructive forces. The irony is that much of the damage is preventable.

Due to widespread human arrogance in thinking that we have brought the forces of nature under control, man has begun to inhabit unstable areas of land which were previously deemed too dangerous to live on, such as floodplains and coastlines.

Additionally, due to widespread human whining, man has begun to think that it is the government's responsibility to pay for damages incurred when forces of nature strike these vulnerable areas.

This year, scientists are predicting a long, cold, wet winter based on studies of a phenomenon called El Niño, which is a mass of warm water in the Pacific Ocean that moves up from near the equator toward the coast of South America. This unusual current is believed to be responsible for much of the weather surrounding

the Pacific Ocean. It occurs every year during the winter months, but is especially strong this year.

The last time El Niño was this strong was recorded in the winter of 1982, when it spawned severe weather throughout North and South America. The U.N. World Meteorological Organization estimated that over 2,000 people were killed and \$13 billion in damage occurred worldwide. In the United States, damage estimates ranged as high as \$2 billion, concentrated mostly along the Pacific Coast.

In light of this knowledge, one would think that the West Coast would be a frenzy of activity as people frantically prepare for the coming severe weather. But that is not happening.

In defense of citizens of the Granola State, there is a lot of preparation going on, but it is almost exclusively limited to the governmental agencies, city and county emergency services, and people with leaky roofs (don't laugh, the wait for a good roofer right now is more than a month).

Also, sales of flood insurance are skyrocketing. These are prudent steps, but what is lacking is a general sense of urgency at the prospect of severe weather.

Further inland, which is everywhere east of the Sierra Nevadas, there is no preparation going on whatsoever, even though the possibility exists that rain and snowfall could exceed the capacities of rivers and drainage systems.

Even more threatening is the prospect that a warmer winter in

the Great Lakes area could send more runoff downstream earlier and faster than the rivers can handle, causing more flooding in the Mississippi River Basin. Residents in these areas are not even aware of the possibility of a problem.

Federal Emergency Management Agency Director James J. Witt is urging people to buy flood insurance, but this is not the great idea it seems.

The problem with insurance is that it lulls people into a false sense of security, making them think that they are prepared for the coming storms. When severe weather strikes, they are hit harder and suffer more damage because they have not prepared as thoroughly as those not buoyed by the false security insurance provides.

And when it comes to paying all those insurance claims, who pays? The policies are written by private companies but are backed by the federal government, so the bill ultimately falls at the feet of the taxpayers. This is in addition to any direct federal money that may be given because of a disaster declaration.

The bottom line is that the country can no longer afford to pay for the irresponsibility of its citizens. Homeowners and government officials alike need to stop relying on the illusion that insurance is a cure-all and realize that the only true way to ease the cost of a natural disaster is to be thoroughly prepared for it.

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